40139

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

CANADIAN THESES ON MICROFICHE

THÈSES CANADIENNES SUR MICROFICHE

NAME OF AUTHOR/*NOM DE L'AUTEUR* JEREMIAH WILLIAM EZEKIEL

TITLE OF THESIS/*TITRE DE LA THÈSE* "Political Content in Contemporary Commercial Films"

UNIVERSITY/*UNIVERSITÉ* Alberta

DEGREE FOR WHICH THESIS WAS PRESENTED/ *GRADE POUR LEQUEL CETTE THÈSE FUT PRÉSENTÉE* Ph. D.

YEAR THIS DEGREE CONFERRED/*ANNÉE D'OBTENTION DE CE GRADE* 1978

NAME OF SUPERVISOR/*NOM DU DIRECTEUR DE THÈSE* Prof. Elwood Murray

Permission is hereby granted to the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

L'autorisation est, par la présente, accordée à la BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE DU CANADA de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans l'autorisation écrite de l'auteur.

DATED/*DATÉ* Oct. 12/1978 SIGNED/*SIGNÉ* Jeremiah W. Ezekiel

PERMANENT ADDRESS/*RÉSIDENCE FIXÉ*
10025 - 94 St.
Edmonton ALBERTA

NL-91 (3-74)

National Library of Canada

Cataloguing Branch
Canadian Theses Division

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Direction du catalogage
Division des thèses canadiennes

NOTICE

The quality of this microfiche is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us a poor photocopy.

Previously copyrighted materials (journal articles, published tests, etc.) are not filmed.

Reproduction in full or in part of this film is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30. Please read the authorization forms which accompany this thesis.

THIS DISSERTATION
HAS BEEN MICROFILMED
EXACTLY AS RECEIVED

AVIS

La qualité de cette microfiche dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de mauvaise qualité.

Les documents qui font déjà l'objet d'un droit d'auteur (articles de revue, examens publiés, etc.) ne sont pas microfilmés.

La reproduction, même partielle, de ce microfilm est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30. Veuillez prendre connaissance des formules d'autorisation qui accompagnent cette thèse.

LA THÈSE A ÉTÉ
MICROFILMÉE TELLE QUE
NOUS L'AVONS REÇUE

NL-339 (3/77)

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

POLITICAL CONTENT IN CONTEMPORARY COMMERCIAL FILMS

by

© JEREMIAH W. EZEKIEL

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL, 1978

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Political Content in Contemporary Commercial Films submitted by Jeremiah W. Ezekiel in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Political Science.

E P Murray

Supervisor

T. C. Pocklington

R. Baird

Robert W. Nelson

External Examiner

Date September 27, 1978

ABSTRACT

Ninety commercial feature films released during late 1975 and early 1976 are analyzed to ascertain the pervasiveness and complexity of political content. A five category classification system is presented, and films are grouped according to the mode of political interest, its "quantity," and complexity. The five categories are: films of minimal political interest; social stratum or sub-culture films; melodramas with politically interesting sub-plots or implications; message movies; and films which include relatively complex social and political analysis. Virtually all films in the sample are discussed -- in greater or lesser detail, depending on the level of interest -- and conclusions are drawn concerning trends within categories and contrasts between categories. British and American films are compared, and an attempt is made to place the latter in the context of mid-seventies politics and cinema.

Several concluding propositions are presented, and implications for future research are identified. The following are among the points made: there is a great deal of political content in commerical feature films, but it tends to be implied, expressive, and descriptive rather than explicit, cognitive, and prescriptive; variations in explicit political content in films may be a less revealing

socio-political "barometer" than are variations in the way screen characters relate to the fictionalized societies in which they function; and the entire question of the effects of political content on cinema audiences ought to be reconsidered, from a perspective that de-emphasizes prejudicial assumptions about the vacuity of commercial films and the gullibility of audiences.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I owe a very special debt of gratitude to Professor Elwood Murray, the chairman of my supervisory committee, who played a vital role in bringing this to fruition. I have benefited, too, from the comments, questions, and interest expressed by the other members of my committee: Professors Richard Baird, T.C. Pocklington, David Bai, Robert Melvin. I thank them all sincerely.

Many others have helped tangibly, though I can name only a few of them: John Patrick Gillese, and my colleagues in Alberta Culture's Film and Literary Arts branch; Owen Hooper, and his co-workers on the Alberta Board of Censors; the exceptionally helpful staff of the Alberta Culture library; my friend and associate, Dr. Sharon Sutherland; and Barbara Brown, who was principally responsible for typing the manuscript.

I am deeply grateful to my wife, Katherine Sutherland, and to our son, Zachary, for their patience and understanding under very difficult circumstances.

What follows is dedicated to the memory of Kath Gardiner.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

I. STUDYING POLITICAL CONTENT IN COMMERICAL FILMS 1

Introduction. 1

Commercial films and political culture. . . 5

Commercial films and directorial expression 12

Approaches to the study of film content . . 17

Formal studies. 20

Informal studies. 23

A modified informal approach. 29

What "political" content means. 33

An overview of the present research 37

Endnotes. 43

II. SOME POLITICAL ASPECTS OF 'UNPOLITICAL' FILMS 50

Introduction and classification scheme. . . 50

Films of minimal political interest 58

Social stratum or sub-culture movies. . . . 69

Melodramas with politically interesting sub-plots or implications 85

Concluding observations 117

Endnotes. 129

III. POLITICAL CONTENT IN MESSAGE MOVIES 135
Introduction. 135
The movies and the messages 139
Summary and conclusions 181
Endnotes. 189

IV. POLITICAL CONTENT IN 'ANALYTICAL' FILMS . . . 194
Introduction. 194
Asylums 196
The future and the past 213
Parables. 250
Street perspectives 270
Institutions. 302
Concluding observations 346
Endnotes. 356

V. POLITICAL CONTENT IN COMMERCIAL FILMS: OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS. 362
Introduction. 362
Politicians and politics. 366
Political content and "country of origin" . 376
Politics in American films: variations over time. 385
Politics and commercial films: final observations. 392
Endnotes. 414

BIBLIOGRAPHY 428

APPENDIX A: INDEX OF FILMS AND REVIEWS. . . 433

APPENDIX B: CHECKLIST OF RELEVANT QUESTIONS 465

APPENDIX C: ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF FILMS WITHIN CATEGORIES. 468

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

I. Percentage Distribution of Films: Country of Origin by Categories of Political Interest 378

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

I. Diagrammatic Representation of the Five Categories Defined in the Text. . . 57

CHAPTER ONE

STUDYING POLITICAL CONTENT IN COMMERCIAL FILMS

> "Politics doesn't exist in Hollywood. People talk about 'saying something' in their films, but they all sell out, if they've got anything to sell in the first place - which most of them don't."
>
> --unidentified Hollywood producer[1]

> "The essence of dramatic form is to let an idea come over people without its being plainly stated. When you say something directly, it is simply not as potent as it is when you allow people to discover it for themselves."
>
> -- Stanley Kubrick[2]

Introduction

Imagine, for a moment, a documentary film about political and social life in a small town. Throughout the film the mayor and other prominent citizens are shown to be motivated by personal business concerns to the detriment of the public interest and at the risk of public safety. A town meeting to discuss matters of life and death focuses almost exclusively on the entrepreneurial concerns of office holders and other notaries. Greed and civic boosterism consistently give rise to unintended or willful misperceptions of real problems. The principal guardian of the public interest is the town police chief who, after occasionally succumbing to political intimidation, ultimately carries the day -- notwithstanding the considerable obstruction of a venal, hypocritical mayor.

The hypothetical response to such a film would vary. It would be hailed as "uncompromising" and "hard hitting" by some, and denounced as "cynical" and "misleading" by others, depending on the effectiveness of the production and the beliefs and values of the viewer. Conceivably, it might be damned with the faintest of praise in the trade papers, exalted as an excellent offbeat film for colleges, festivals and "special situations." Whatever the reception, the film would be discussed, analyzed, criticized, praised or condemned as a political film with a political point of view.

The film we have been discussing is _Jaws_[3] which is, at this writing, one of the most successful films of all time. It is not a documentary, of course; its exhibition is not limited to "special situations"; and it is not usually thought of as a film with political content. Instead it has been praised and condemned as a slick, escapist Hollywood "entertainment," a "commercial" film dedicated to mindless thrills rather than to political education or indoctrination. Yet the on-shore activity in Jaws, which is roughly half the film, is set in precisely the social and political environment described above. The fictitious town is an island resort called Amity, which, one gathers, is like Martha's Vineyard, where the film was shot. Shark attacks constitute the single, terrifying threat to public safety. The local business community, for whom the mayor functions as spokesman, discounts this threat and is instead apprehensive about the proposed closure of the beaches for the imminent fourth of July weekend. Commerce prevails throughout much of the film. Of those in authority, only the police chief sensibly perceives the threat and its solution. The abiding philosophy and prevailing motives of the town fathers are succinctly stated by the mayor: "Amity is a summer town. We need summer dollars."

The point of this exercise is not to argue that Jaws is politically profound or courageous; it is neither. It is, as has been widely recognized, an entertaining, expertly paced suspense film; there has been no mistake about that. But we are concerned with politics, and in the midst of the thrills and suspense comes an unambiguous, sustained, if not overstated, political point of view: that politics is the handmaiden of commerce, that politicians are not typically men of integrity, and that men of integrity must be wary of politicians.[4]

This illustration, then, from one of the most commercial films of all time appropriately prefaces the major assumptions of this study: () "commercial" or "entertainment" films, as distinct from "limited-audience: films, contain far more political and social content than is usually acknowledged either by students of politics or by students of film; (2) notwithstanding obvious methodological difficulties, an analysis of film content over a specified period of time will reveal regularities suggestive, at least, of specific propositions about the relationship between politics and the cinema. Let us proceed, in the present chapter, to clarify the meaning of the term "commercial" and to present some initial arguments as to why the commercial cinema is worthy of serious interest. From there we shall discuss what motion picture content is, together with the problems and limitations of mere quantification. Next we shall specify what constitutes political content in motion pictures. Finally in this chapter, we shall describe the selection of a non-random sample of films for analysis of political content, and indicate the several levels of analysis used in this study.

Commercial films and political culture

The designation "commercial" with reference to film is so loaded with unintended negative connotations that some preliminary clarification is in order. The term is emphatically not being used in a prejudicial sense, and should not be taken as a reflection on the artistic worth of a film, its probable success, or the motives of its makers (such as making money, as distinct from creative self expression). It is a truism that many "commercial" films are great art and that many "non-commercial" films are trash; that the reverse is also the case is equally non-controversial and needs no elaboration here.

The term "commercial," then, shall be used in a neutral, descriptive sense with reference to fictional feature length films designated for exhibition in cinemas catering to mass audiences rather than elites or special groups. By implication, the term excludes documentaries, animated cartoons, preview materials, and all feature length films playing to select audiences either because of membership requirements (e.g., film society programs) or because of sociological and linguistic considerations (e.g., German or Portuguese films booked for one night engagements). By definition, exposure to commercial films is not formally limited by membership, subscription, language or ethnic considerations. Non-commercial films, on the other hand, are those which play in limited-audience situations normally involving one-night engagements.[5]

Given the preceding definition, of what political interest is the commercial cinema? What reasons may be advanced to justify an excursion into a realm of popular culture which has all too rarely captured the professional attention of political scientists? More specifically, why not enjoy the shark and forget the mayor of Amity?

Films, like the other arts, are shaped by the social and political realities of the societies in which they are made and can reasonably be expected to reflect or reflect upon the salient or prevailing values of those societies.[6] In this sense, any feature film may be fruitfully analyzed for content which is relatively supportive of the political system, or relatively critical of it -- even to the point of being revolutionary. This is true not only of films which are primarily and overtly political, but also of films which are ostensibly "mere" entertainment. Some examples will illustrate this point.

The portrayal of the mayor in Jaws is a cynically critical view of politicians that is (a) probably consistent with the views of many Americans in the post-Watergate period; and (b) certainly consistent with the views of many American film-makers, as we shall see later. Moreover, the parallels with Nixon and Watergate are only thinly disquised: the mayor's initial response to the shark attacks is denial and cover-up (an intimidated coroner falsely attributes a swimmer's death to boat propeller blades); the police chief is harassed and obstructed in his efforts to close the beaches and is encouraged to prosecute petty vandals, such as sign defacers, even while the shark remains at large; and when the truth is finally out (a shark attack occurs in broad daylight before hundreds of spectators, including the mayor and his family), a shattered and chastened mayor privately prepares his justification for the press ("I was acting in the town's best interests..."). Briefly stated, the politics of Jaws is post-Watergate disillusionment.

American police movies from Bullitt to The French Connection II provide a broader example of how the films of a society can be useful indicators of the values, norms, power relationships, and public affairs of that society. These constituted a group of films which explicitly and implicitly explored the meaning of "law and order," and the relationship between police and other groups in society. Collectively, the films communicated a lot about what the issue was, what the various points of view were, and what was felt to be at stake. Individually, each film offered its own solutions, its own values, its own perspectives. More often than not, films of this group were unabashedly illiberal, and it did not seem coincidental that the genre began a sharp decline towards the end of the Nixon presidency.

By way of further amplification, French films of recent years -- such as Lacombe, Lucien, And Now My Love, Les Violons Du Bal, and Special Section -- have tended to focus politically on two dramatic events: the

German occupation during World War II, especially the role played by French fascists and their sympathizers; and the May 1968 uprising and its consequences. Rarely, it would seem, does a contemporary French film fail to allude to one or both these events, however briefly; and related problems such as anti-Semitism, class conflict, and generational differences are occasional themes as well.[7]

One would not suggest, of course, that all political points of view on all issues find cinematic expression, that the films of an era are a fool-proof guide to the politics of that era, or that every interesting issue, attitude, or political disposition finds its way into popular film. But politics does manifest itself in a large variety of films, and some observers have gone so far as to affirm the accuracy of film as a social barometer. British sociologist and film connoisseur I.C. Jarvie, for example, has praised the American cinema for

> its ability to portray every aspect of American society with almost clinical accuracy: from the urban, rural, and negro slums, through suburbia, to its highest social and political realms: american film-men knew their society and put it on their screens. When I first visited America, I was staggered by how accurately it had been portrayed on the American screen, portrayed with

> a fidelity hardly ever achieved in Britain, and portrayed in a cinema with no pretensions to 'realism' whatsoever.[8]

Jarvie may be overstating the "clinical accuracy" of films, but his general point remains persuasive:

> Apart from anthropological fieldwork I know of nothing comparable from the point of view of getting inside the skin of another society as viewing films made for the home market. One is not in a good position to judge their truth, but it is safe to say they are made for and seen by a mass audience; this is both a secure and highly significant as well as informative starting point.[9]

A similar point is made by film critic Joseph Kanon in a sociologically astute comment on The Parallax View. Kanon argues that melodramas or movies of intrigue "can tell us a great deal about what an audience is prepared to accept as a premise for entertainment. They are barometers of assumptions."10 To exemplify Kanon's point very generally, a film world inhabited by sleazy politicians, crooked cops, deranged gunmen, available women, and fast cars entails a different set of assumptions about society and audiences than a film world populated by dedicated statesmen, honest policemen, hard-working businessmen, faithful wives, and public transportation.

This notion of movies as barometers of assumptions underscores the importance of recognizing implied content in film along with overt proselytizing about politics and social problems. The use of terms such as "implied" and "implicit" should not be taken to mean that social content in films is somehow mysteriosly hidden from view. Instead, the terms are meant to suggest content which is not apparent, in the same sense in which political scientists speak of "latent socialization": that is, socialization which is not apparent to either the agent or the recipient or both.

Political content may be implicit, or not apparent, for several reasons including: (a) one's inability to recognize, combine and decode signs and meanings; under this handicap the film Nashville, for example, is merely "an exposé of Music City"; (b) a reluctance to consider data beyond the main outline of plot; this means that political content would be recognized only in films which, like State of Seige or Hearts and Minds, are primarily and overtly about politics; and (c) generally, a reluctance to think through and reflect upon the implications of what one has seen. To the extent that these handicaps are avoided, the exploration of relationships between politics and society will be greatly facilitated.

Commercial films and directorial expression

Up to this point, we have been discussing films from the point of view of their relationship to society at large, or, stated another way, films as carriers of political culture in varying degrees of explicitness. Less macroscopically, it is also true that films are simultaneously means of expression for individual film-makers (principally, though not exclusively, directors and writers). Such self-expression may range from comprehensive ideological statements to far less grandiose "empirical" claims which are, nevertheless, general enough to be deemed theoretical. At the other extreme, film-makers may have nothing politically relevant to say beyond the occasional isolated factual claim ("Lee Harvey Oswald did not act alone") that is grounded neither in ideology nor in empirical theory.

These are non-controversial observations, one assumes, in the case of politically committed and relatively independent film-makers such as Michaelangelo Antonioni, whose recent film, The Passenger, is overtly about political commitment. But it is also true of more conventional film-makers such as Don Siegel. Siegel's Invasion of the Body Snatchers is an excellent case in point: a small town is "taken over" by creatures hatched in giant pods -- creatures who are superficially identical to their victims, but who have no emotions or feelings. Says Siegel:

> To be a pod means that you have no passion, no anger, that you talk automatically, that the spark of life has left you .... I purposely had the prime spokesman for the pods be a pod psychiatrist. He speaks with authority, knowledge. He really believes that being a pod is preferable to being a frail, frightened human who cares.[11]

Siegel's film has become a classic of the genre and is invariably and rightly taken to be "a parable of modern society."[12]

A more recent parable is Francis Ford Coppola's The Godfather, and its sequel. Ostensibly a big budget crime melodrama, and an enjoyable, successful film on that level, The Godfather has been widely interpreted as something more. This emerges from critical assessments, and, more importantly for present purposes, from comments by the director himself:

> I always wanted to use the Mafia as a metaphor for America. If you look at the film, you see that it's focused that way. The first line is 'I believe in America.' I feel that the Mafia is an incredible metaphor for this country. Both the Mafia and America have roots in Europe....both the Mafia and America feel they are benevolent organizations. Both the Mafia and America have their hands stained with blood from what it is necessary to do to protect their power and

> interests. Both are totally capitalistic phenomena and basically have a profit motive.[13]

The Godfather, in other words, is not only "entertainment"; it is also a vehicle within which Coppola expresses his views about corporate America and capitalism. Not surprisingly, these views are further developed in *The Godfather*, *Part Two* and are manifested in a more limited sense in an excellent, and less commercially successful film called *The Conversation*. In the latter film, for example, Coppola carries his parallel between the Mafia and big business one step further by explicitly indicating that business too is capable of intra-organizational murder.

Film-makers can be didactic in another, rather different way when, by conscious intent or otherwise, they include in their films naive or sophisticated theories of behavior, or more simple assertions of fact. So-called "problem films," for example, are quasi-academic treatises on complex questions such as the origins of racism, the strengths and weaknesses of the legal system, the necessity or the futility of war, the causes of crime and delinquency, and so on. Frequently, these are attractively packaged explanations which, even at their most naive (and sometimes *because* of their naiveté), reach far larger numbers of people than more scholarly modes of expression.

Theories of behavior -- why people are what they are, why they do what they do -- are overtly stated or implied in most narratives, and movies are no exception. The recent film Death Wish is a blunt, controversial example. The film opens with an extremely brutal burglary-rape after which the wife of the main character is viciously slain, while his daughter is left mentally disturbed. The "hero" -- a pacifist, conscientious objector, and admitted "bleeding heart liberal" -- is transformed into a vigilante who terrorizes and kills hosts of New York muggers and other undesirables during the remainder of the film. The theory which permeates this, naive though it is, is roughly the following: (a) liberal pacifists are what they are because they lack first hand experience with crimes of violence; (b) if a liberal pacifist were to come face to face with the horror of urban violence he would quickly abandon abstract principles in favor of direct action to rid the streets of social vermin, and he would come to enjoy it. Other simplistic assumptions are at work in the film when it is revealed that the hero's vigilantism has reduced muggings by fifty percent.

Specific factual assertions, as distinct from generalizations of a more theoretical kind, are easily recognizable when rendered explicitly. These run the gamut from Tom Loughlin's description of the plight of Indians in 19th century California (The Master Gunfighter), to Coppola's assertion that big business, the Mafia, and the pre-Castro Cuban regime were thick as thieves on the eve of the revolution (The Godfather, Part II). It is also worth bearing in mind that many films are virtually labelled as factual -- an invitation to the viewer to regard everything in the film as somehow "true." Factual assertions of this kind, qualified and otherwise, occur in films as diverse as Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid, Serpico, and, somewhat notoriously, Walking Tall.[14] More recent examples include The Story of Adele H., All the President's Men, and Dog Day Afternoon -- all of which will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

Finally, it is apparent that, as with other kinds of film content, one may detect factual connotations which are neither intended nor plainly evident. An especially interesting example of this was brought to light in recent television research conducted by Professor Joseph Dominick.15 His was a study of correlations between children's viewing of television crime shows ("Ironside," "Mannix," "Hawaii Five-O," et al.) and the children's beliefs, attitudes, and acquisition of knowledge. Of particular interest was Dominick's finding that for boys and girls alike, the viewing of crime shows correlated positively with the belief that "criminals usually get caught," and with knowledge of an arrested person's civil rights. While this was an effects study rather than a study of content, it is easy to discern the content basis for both kinds of learning: the absurd success ratio of television crime fighters, and the inevitable "read him his rights" scene when the criminal is apprehended.

Commercial films, we have argued, are shaped in a general way by the political and social realities of the cultural milieu in which they originate, and, more specifically, by the political and artistic sensibilities of individual film-makers. A particular film, in other words, can simultaneously communicate something about the film-maker, and something about the society in which he or she functions. The specifics of what is being communicated must be gleaned from an examination of content. Let us turn now to a consideration of what constitutes motion picture content, and what kind of content can reasonably be called political.

Approaches to the study of film content

It must be emphasized, first of all, that the content of films is the primary object of this study, as distinct from the intentions of producers, directors, and screen writers, or the effects of films on audiences. Intentions are problematical in that they are not always known to outside observers, and are not necessarily realized in the finished product. Moreover, film-makers are sometimes unaware of the political implications of their work, or simply are not prepared to acknowledge the politics inherent in what is supposed by some to be mere entertainment. Clearly, however, the known intentions of a film-maker can support or undermine the interpretations of an observer, and can function as useful checks on idiosyncratic readings of film content.

"Effects" studies, while undeniably valuable, must also be differentiated from content studies. The latter are normally and rightly regarded as preliminary base lines from which to proceed to effects studies. It makes no sense, for example, to ask whether a film promoting racial tolerance had its desired effect on an audience unless it has been established beforehand that the content was indeed oriented towards racial tolerance. The role of film content analysis, then, is to determine somehow what is "objectively" on the screen, while the role of effects studies is to determine how much of that content reaches its intended audience.

A question worth considering, however, is whether studies of the effects of films on audiences might be different if researchers were more attuned to content other than, or in addition to, sexual or violent material.[16] A plausible hypothesis is that a significant amount of learning may take place. The Exorcist, for example, was engineered to fighten audiences and it succeeded rather well. More importantly, however, it *instructed* audiences that modern science, and especially modern psyshiatry and medicine, is impotent in the face of certain extraordinary phenomena, and that this impotence is more likely to be concealed than admitted. Not only is the anti-science theme demonstrably evident in The Exorcist and its imitators, but it is rather more persuasively and realistically dramatized than some of the more sensational content. Whether such themes are recognized and retained by audiences is a question that goes well beyond the scope of the present study, but the example does illustrate how content studies may generate non-obvious hypotheses for subsequent effects research.

How is one to determine what is "really" on the screen in a study of film content? Let us consider, briefly, how others have approached this problem before discussing the methodology used in the present research. For purposes of comparison, existing content analyses of films, together with related studies of television programs, may be roughly classified as "formal" or "informal" with referene to the methodologies employed. There are considerable differences between the two types of studies.

Formal studies

The first group of studies are relatively rigorous methodologically and include works by Dale (1935) Jones (1942), Smythe (1954), Shaw and Newell (1972), Dominick (1973), and Long and Simon (1974).[17] In varying degrees, these are characterized by formal quantitative techniques such as carefully pre-tested content categories, and the use of two or more trained observers. The content examined tends to be comparatively explicit (e.g., number of violent incidents in a film or program, occupations of major characters, nationality of heroes and villains), and the analysis of data often results in a kind of content inventory (e.g., social class distribution of major characters) which may then be compared with known population characteristics.

One of the better studies of this group will illustrate these points. Jones (1942), together with her assistant, analyzed on-screen content of 100 films over an eleven month period; the schedule or checklist used had been developed over a period of three months. Her reported results ranged from straightforward percentage presentations to more interesting comparative remarks. Here is an extract:

> In our group of one hundred pictures there were 188 major charactoers. Of this total, 126 were men and 62 women. In other words, there were twice as many men as women.
>
> Each character was classified according to his social age. It was found that three out of every five of the 188 major characters were "independent adults" -- that is to say ... they were shown as economically established, free of parental influence, usually unmarried, and with definitely limited social and economic responsibilities.
>
> It is interesting to note that people with the characteristics of this social age group, which is more commonly represented than any other on the screen, are seldom found in real life.[18]

Jones, like other quantitatively oriented researchers in this group, tends to de-emphasize implicit content at the data gathering stage of her research, while clearly acknowledging the limitations of her more formal approach. She is cautious, for example, regarding the treatment of war on the screen:

> ...since our study was concerned exclusively with quantifications, we did not analyze some important aspects of film content which we found could not feasibly be quantified. To give but one specific example, after some experimentation we found that an analysis of the presentation of war on the screen appeared to lend itself much better to qualitative than quantitative summarization.[19]

A key problem, one assumes, would be the undermining of stated values ("war is hell") by implied values (war is a requisite for heroic achievement, true comradeship, patriotic service, and so on).

A more recent example of this type of research is Dominick's (1973) examination of prime-time television shows (not to be confused with his effects study discussed above). Using as many as seven coders, Dominick collected data on the frequency and type of television crimes, and the sex, age and race of television criminals and their victims. The following extracts are typical of his research report and conclusions:

> 1. Television overrepresents violent crimes directed at individuals. Real-world crime is usually non-violent and directed at property.
> 2. Television criminals bear little resemblance to their real life counterparts. Blacks, young people, and lower-class individuals are underrepresented in the TV criminal world.
>
> . . . .
>
> Both TV Crime and TV violence are presented in ways that seem to minimize their potential threat to society. To do this, however, each uses its own particular techniques. Violence is typically set in the past or future, in relatively unfamiliar surroundings, and involves people who are not closely acquainted. While TV crime usually occurs in the present and in more familiar urban-suburban settings, it has been pushed indoors and is portrayed as private, hidden, and unsuccessful. It is

> performed by one-dimensional caricatures who are motivated by personal failings, not by inadequacies existing in society.[20]

It is no accident, incidentally, that of the two examples given, the more recent work is a study of television content. Published formal studies of film content have become considerably rarer than comparable television research.[21]

Informal studies

Informal studies of film content, on the other hand, are voluminous and are characterized by considerably more relaxed methodologies, and a heavy reliance on the subjective impressions of the respective authors. Informal studies may be sub-classified into (i) those dealing with comparatively explicit content, such as MacCann (1964), White and Averson (1971), and Friar and Friar (1972); and (ii) those dealing with comparatively implicit content, notably Kracauer (1947), Wolfenstein and Leites (1950), Durgnat (1970), and French (1973).

Informal studies of explicit content tend to be more historically oriented than the quantitative research discussed above, and often focus on the portrayal of specific groups in movies over a long period of time.

One would include, for example, studies dealing with very narrow subject matter, such as Smith's (1973) account of film portrayals of Vietnam veterans, together with recent sweeping appraisals of Hollywood's treatment of Indians (Friar and Friar, 1972), blacks (Mapp, 1972), and women (Rosen, 1973). Also included are studies dealing very generally with matters such as the history of "problem" films in America (White and Averson, 1971). Studies of the latter kind are useful in providing an historical perspective on politics in movies, though they have a tendency to be sketchy, rambling, summaries of what is well known by any film goer: Lost Weekend and Days of Wine and Roses were about alcoholism, The Grapes of Wrath was about the depression, I Was a Communist for the FBI was a post-war anti-Communist film, Dr. Strangelove was a black comedy about the cold war, John Wayne is a conservative, Stanley Kramer is a liberal, and so on.[22]

Another informal study of explicit film content is Furhammar and Isaksson's Politics and Film, a collection of essays on propaganda films, defined by the authors as movies "which have a clear political purpose."[23] As one might expect, the essays deal with topics ranging from post-revolutionary Russian cinema and Nazi propaganda films, to patriotic themes in British war movies, the Italian neo-realist period, and so on. With the exception of obvious propaganda pictures such as The Green Berets -- an easy target if ever there was one -- contemporary commercial films get short shrift.[24] A chapter on Hollywood, for example, covers some predictable ground: anti-Nazi films of the pre-war period, McCarthyism and the movie industry, and occasional references to films about politicians. The book is most successful in discussing principles and techniques of propaganda films, and in sporadic discussions of implicit content. The latter is exemplified in this concise, though not altogether convincing, argument about the portrayal of the wealthy in entertainment films:

> Even in entertainment films from the capitalist countries, rich men have tended to be suspicious characters -- they occupy and almost institutional position as scapegoats. When the rich man does not reform into a decent fellow...he often gets punished or destroyed in much the way that villains do. Superficially, such a convention might be seen as a latent threat to the established economic machinery, as it keeps alive the stereotype of the capitalist as exploiter. But to the extent that films containing this figure can be said to have any political effect at all, it is probably the exact opposite: by restoring the justice and balance lacking in society, the film offers a form of comforting compensation. The cinematic villain functions ritualistically as a representative victim for the audience's social rancour. Far from being a threat, such films are a political saftey valve.[25]

The authors seem convinced that such "hidden propaganda" in entertainment films is primarily effective in reinforcing conventional values or "prodding in the direction of conformity," rather that stimulating audience reflection change.

The notion of "hidden propaganda" brings us around to a consideration of those studies which utilize informal methodologies in the analysis of primarily implicit content. This is work which is characterized by almost exclusively subjective interpretations that go well beyond the surface details of plot, estimates of age and income, and the like. Instead, these studies are concerned with less obvious phenomena such as unarticulated assumptions (e.g., the wealthy are miserable), recurring themes (the misunderstood and falsely accused hero), and persistent pictorial motifs (German expressionist sets). Typically, an attempt is made to explain such regularities in terms of the cultural or political settings in which the films were made. The most academic study of this kind is by Wolfenstein and Leites (1950), but it is of little political interest. The authors examined recurrent patterns, or "plot configurations" in American films and attempted to account for them in terms of psychological processes of film-makers and film-goers, and psychological differences across cultures. One such recurrent theme is that of the hero who is falsely believed to be a criminal, and the heroine who is falsely believed to be a wicked woman. This is referred to as the "eat-your-cake-and-have-it aspect of American films. We can see the hero and heroine carrying out forbidden wishes and in the end see them escape penalties since these acts are shown to be merely false appearance."[26] The analysis, as one might gather, is heavily psychoanalytic but carefully reasoned.

Easily the most controversial informal study of implicit content is Kracauer's From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German film. Kracauer argues that the persistence of certain visual and narrative motifs in pre-war German cinema can be interpreted as a "secret history" of psychological dispositions pervading that culture. The specification of this secret history, he tells us, can help us understand Hitler's ascent and ascendancy. A central thesis of Kracauer is that the German cinema reflected the anxieties and tensions of the "collective mentality" or "collective soul" of the German people, a soul which oscillated between the extremes of tyranny and chaos, incapable of imagining true freedom. Here, for example, is and excerpt from his discussion of The Cabinet of Dr.

Caligari:

> The theme of tyranny...pervades the screen from beginning to end. Swivel-chairs of enormous height symbolize the superiority of the city officials turning on them, and, similarly, the gigantic back of the chair in Alan's attic testifies to the invisible presence of powers that have their grip on him. Staircases reinforce the effect of the furniture: numerous steps ascend to police headquarters, and in the lunatic asylum itself no less than three parallel flights of stairs are called upon to mark Dr. Caligari's position at the top of the hierarchy.
>
> . . . .
>
> Whether intentionally or not, Caligari exposes the soul wavering between tyranny and chaos, and facing a desperate situation: any escape from tyranny seems to throw it into a state of utter confusion. ...Like the Nazi world, that of Caligari overflows with sinister portents, acts of terror and outbursts of panic....And in this film ...is unleashed a stong sadism and an appetite for destruction. The reappearance of these traits on the screen once more testifies to their prominence in the German collective soul.[27]

The concept of a "collective soul" is very much in disrepute among modern social scientists, though terms such as "political culture" carry some of the flavor of what people like Kracauer were talking about. (Interestingly, Kracauer himself was critical of another related concept, that of "fixed national character.") At any rate, From Caligari to Hitler has been thoroughly criticized on that score, as well as for the "non-objectivity" of its interpretations, and for unsubstantiated assumptions, about what films meant for audiences and producers. 28

The strengths of Kracauer's reasearch are illustrative of the general strengths of informal studies of implicit content: (i) his analysis and appreciation of film content is thorough, well reasoned, and sensitive to layers of meaning other than the grossly superficial, however suspicious one may be about subsequent inferences to collective inner urges; he understands the "grammar of film" and the importance of discussing meaning within the context of the film itself; (ii) he reveals a sensitivity to the importance of social systems and historical processes as plausible explanations of movie redundancies, instead of stopping at more simplistic explanations (e.g., producers and directors are merely mimicking proven box-office successes).

A modified informal approach

Informal studies, on the whole, are more interesting than formal studies because they are more likely to capture the richness and depth of film content than are mere recitations of numerical data. Indeed, formal studies, we have suggested, tend to be most interesting when researchers go beyond their quantified data into more speculative areas. The problem with informal studies, of course, is a tendency to be too subjective, too impressionistic, too idiosyncratic. One cannot help wondering, on occasion, just whose "secret urges" are really on display. It may be feasible, however, to avoid the sterility of "objective" film content analyses and some of the weaknesses of informal studies. A case in point is Raymond William Baker's examination of the Egyptian political cinema in the manner we have designated "informal": film interpretations are solely his own, and he delves into layers of meaning beyond the superficial. At the same time, Baker is committed to justifying his interpretations with "internal evidence from the film," and with whatever external evidence may be available, including statements by directors, banning by political officials, and assessments by film critics.[29] With some modifications, this is roughly the approach to film content utilized in the present studly.

In the first place, we are convinced that film should be studied from the point of view of appreciation for and understanding of the medium, and not from the point of view of what minimal amount of material is presumed to penetrate the consciousness of an average audience. (This is neither an expression of contempt for

V

"average" audiences nor a belief in limited audience comprehension; it is a rejection of a particular approach to film study.) Film content should be defined and analyzed within the context of the verbal and visual elements of the film *per se*, and in the juxtaposition of these elements to produce meanings. This presupposes some knowledge of film art in general, and a favorable prejudice towards the particular material being viewed. By that we mean a presumption that the material is intelligible -- that shots, scenes, and sequences will have *meaning* in the context of the film.

This is an important and not necessarily obvious point, in that it underscores the difference between taking films seriously, and viewing them as mere entertainment. *The Godfather* and its sequel, for example, functioned well as crime melodramas; but each film contained material that was superfluous to a straight-forward gangland story. We made sense of this footage by investing it with some socio-political meaning: something was being said about corporate America, the Vietnam war, the Catholic church, and so on. This does not mean that all segments of all films should be treated with equal seriousness. Indeed, a crucial difference between good and bad films is how much of the material can be made comprehensible, and how much of the material functions only as a time-wasting device. Intelligibility, then, ought to be a presupposition until satisfactory interpretation is rendered, or until the material is written off as so much useless footage.

A second critical point is the importance of context: if film content is defined as what an informed and appreciative observer says is on the screen, then those observations must be justified and debated within the context of the film itself. In Baker's terminology, interpretations must be supported by "internal evidence from the film." To return to our example, if The Godfather is said to draw parallels between the morals and methods of Mafia gangsters and the morals and methods of businessmen, one should specify what sequences in the film support this interpretation. To challenge such an interpretation, one does not simply point out that the parallel might have been missed by many filmgoers. Instead, one might point out that other interpretations of the sequences in question are more plausible, that certain inconvenient material was ignored, and so on. Our concern is what is on the screen -- the political content of films -- withous presuming that such content is or is not perceived by most viewers.

This insistence that content statements must be justified by evidence from the film itself is intended to be a useful constraint on unsubstantiated, idiosyncratic interpretations. Another kind of constraint is operative when one compares one's own judgements with those of others, a comparison that is all too rarely made in film literature. Film critics and reviewers are certainly appreciative observers, and some are surprisingly sensitive to the political nuances of popular films. Thus, for many films -- and for virtually all interesting films -- a researcher enjoys, in addition to his own detailed observations, a myriad of critiques and reviews of varying depth and relevance. These, together with the statements film-makers make about their own work, can be an invaluable aid in establishing what political meaning may be legitimately inferred from filmed material.

What "political" content means

Having committed ourselves to a largely informal approach to the study of film content, let us turn now to a consideration of the term "political." The idea here is not to argue for or against the adoption of any particular definition of terms such as "politics" and "political system," but to give the reader some indication of which phenomena were considered pertinent when the present research was undertaken. These phenomena can be divided into two classes: those which are political, in a comparatively strict sense of that word; and those which are politically relevant.[30]

Political content in films means any verbal and/ or visual portrayal of, or reference to, individuals, groups, and processes involved in the determination, adjudication, and enforcement of binding decisions for a society. The notion of "binding decisions for a society" makes this definition primarily government-oriented. By and large, the phenomena covered here would be immediately recognizable by political scientists, and many laymen, as inherently political. One would include, for example, treatments of politicians, administrators, judges, law enforcers, political parties, elections, legislative bodies, interest groups, wars and revolutions.

Certain other phenomena can be called politically relevant in the sense that there are theoretical, empirical, or normative reasons for believing that they have, or ought to have, some bearing on the conduct of politics. For example, it is a theoretical expectation that general dispositions towards authority figures are likely to extend to the political sphere; i.e., those whose behavior towards family, church, and school is characteristically compliant are unlikely to be closet revolutionaries. This expectation is occasionally supported in empirical research, as when authoritarian dispositions correlate with certain kinds of political behavior. At the same time, one might argue that regardless of any empirical connection between authoritarian values and matters such as election outcomes, authoritarianism is a normatively undesirable characteristic of a political culture.

Generally, then, politically relevant content in films means any verbal and/or visual material pertaining to matters such as: good and evil in human nature; what constitutes a good society; patterns of dominance and submission in society; modes of conflict resolution; social and political differences in society, including references to class differences, group interests, racism, and so on; motivational and dispositional phenomena of political interest, including wants and needs, beliefs, attitudes, values, and opinions; and any discussion of issues or problems of a public nature, including references to matters such as women's role in society, Indian land claims, invasion of privacy, drug addiction, and so on. These examples are intended to be general and illustrative, rather than specific and exhaustive.

The two definitions, taken together, reflect an extremely broad notion of the kind of film content that might be considered political, and we are mindful of the problems inherent in this. The present study, for example, involved an analysis of commercial films by a single researcher. It became necessary at a very early stage in the research to make some judgments about how much ostensibly political, or politically relevant, content would be considered germane; or for that matter, how much could be adequately noted by the researcher. The definitions include, for example, filmed portrayals of policeman, though clearly it was not feasible for a single researcher to make detailed notes on every portrayal of every policeman in scores of films. But any portrayal or discussion of policemen that could be construed, by implication or otherwise, as a *statement* of some kind was certainly noted, and with as much detail as possible. A scene, for example, in which a policeman stole an apple and subsequently winked at the camera, while a fruit vendor's back was turned, was not interpreted as an illustration of police corruption. But such a statement might well be implied when, in another film, a reporter casually exclaimed: "The cops. The cops. They're all on the take. Everyone of them."

Why, then, was it necessary to commit oneself to such a broad definition of politics in the first place? Because it was impossible to anticipate the subject matter that films would deal with, and a narrow definition of politics would undoubtedly have proven too restrictive once the project got underway. As subsequent chapters will show, one needed a definition of political content that would accomodate: a film in which sports and dope dealing are shown as common avenues of social mobility for young urban blacks (Aaron Loves Angela); a film about a homicidal cabbie (Taxi driver); a spoof about chemical and biological warfare (Whiffs); a film which challenged the values of conformity and submissiveness to authority (One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest); a film about a rape victim (Lipstick); a film about a third party presidential candidate and the assassination of a country music superstar (Nashville); and a film about private morality in conflict with military honor (Conduct Unbecoming). These are only examples, of course, and the films varied greatly in quality and importance. But each of them was of some obvious political interest, and a definition of political content that excluded any of them would be altogether too narrow.

An overview of the present research

The research that will be discussed in the chapters which follow was an analysis of political and politically relevant content in contemporary commercial films. The study was of an exploratory rather than hypothesis-testing nature, and was intended as a preliminary inquiry into the prevasiveness and depth of political content in a designated group of movies.

The films chosen for the study constituted a non-random sample, and included all contemporary films approved for commercial exhibition in Alberta during the period October 1, 1975 to March 31, 1976.[31] A film was considered contemporary if its copyright date was 1974 or later. The sample was suplemented by several movies which technically did not fit into the six-month period specified above, but which were contemporary, commercial, available in local cinemas, and of some political interest.[32]

The six-month period from October to March was selected because it included the peak periods just prior to Christmas and Easter when a great many of the year's major commercial releases are submitted for approval and classification; normally, that is the busiest period for non-major releases as well. (The "summer doldrums" for the commercial cinima tend to start in April or May, reach a peak during the mid-summer period, and taper off towards early September.) In other words, while the sample was in no sense random, it did include the film industry's total new commercial output for a significant North American market during peak release months, and it was supplemented by other commercial fare included on the grounds of political interest and availability. This yielded a total sample size of ninety films, and these are listed in Appendix 'A'.

Each film was viewed at least once by the author, and notes were taken about any content which seemed particularly interesting in terms of the definition of politics and politically relevant content outlined above. A checklist of questions had been prepared earlier, and these were referred to from time to time over the six month period as and occasional reminder of what one ought to be looking for. The checklist is included in Appendix 'B'. The fundamental question asked of each film was: "What is in here of political interest?" The more specific questions are merely illustrative of this central concern.

In addressing oneself to this central question, several levels of analysis were utilized. First, we collected comparatively non-controversial explicit data about films and characters in films. These include descriptions of who was in the film (age, sex, occupation, etc.) and what happened to him or to her (the details of plot). The character descriptions were limited to major characters and significant characters in explicitly political roles. Our intention here was not merely to compile an inventory, but to investigate the possibility of relationships among variables. For example, given that some major characters were policemen and some outlaws, how did outcomes vary for each type?

A second level of analysis involved information about the beliefs, attitudes, values, and other political psychological or political cultural phenomena, which could be inferred for major characters and for characters in obvious political roles. Evidence for these attributes could run the gamut from explicit statements by or about the character in question, to non-verbal behavioral indicators. Information of this kind was collected when available, and when the film was sufficiently interesting to warrant more complex analysis.

The third, and most complex, level of analysis involved a detailed consideration of what deeper political meanings might be gleaned from the film as a whole. Here, one was concerned about the socio-political system in which the film was set, a detailed consideration of what the film was saying about the society in which it originated or about the world in general, and assessment of the political relevance of the film in terms of its portrayal of "human nature" and the causes and consequences of behavior, and, very generally, an assessment and evaluation of the film as a political statement. This level of analysis, which was the most important one, entailed a heavy reliance on the observations and judgments of the writer. These will be argued on the strength of the internal evidence of the film, and, when possible, they will be discussed in conjunction with the judgments of others. This most complex level of analysis was limited, for the most part, to the most politically interesting films in the sample.[33]

Finally, we have attempted to compile background information on directors and screenwriters, who were presumed to be the primary and secondary "authors" of films respectively. This latter prejudice was and will be sustained in the absence of compelling evidence to the contrary, and will be qualified when the available evidence warrants it.[34] The designation of the director as principal author of a film is not an affirmation of the auteur theory of film criticism.[35] It is a simplifying assumption based on a conviction that, in the long run, the director's name is the best single predictor of film quality; less confidently, one suspects that the screenwriter's name would be the next best predictor of quality. This kind of information was collected in the expectation that political content in films could be related to the backgrounds and socio-political values of their creators, though the specification of such relationships will not be attempted here.

Having collected data on ninety films, our first task was to organize it, notwithstanding the uncomfortable fact that there was no obvious starting point. Accordingly, we have devised a classification scheme for the ninety films, with categories based on the prevalence and nature of political content. The classification will be presented in the next chapter, which will also include a detailed discussion of many of the films from the first three categories of the five-category typology. The two subsequent chapters will involve a more thorough consideration of the two most interesting categories in this classification scheme. In chapter five, our concluding chapter, we address ourselves to the specific question of politicial figures and how they are depicted in the movies, and we shall attempt to place our sample of films, and our research findings, in their historical context; finally, we shall consider some of the broader implications of the research and argue for a reconsideration of the whole question of political content in commercial films.

ENDNOTES

1. Quoted in: Andrew Kopkind, "Hollywood Politics: Hearts, Minds and Money, " Ramparts, Vol. 13 (10) pp. 45-48.

2. Quoted in: "Kubrick's Grandest Gamble," Time, Dec. 15, 1975, pp. 32-40.

3. Jaws was directed by Steven Spielberg from a screenplay by Peter Benchley and Carl Gottlieb (with help from John Milius), based on a novel by Benchley. Many of the examples cited in this chapter are films which have enjoyed considerable popularity. This was a deliberate choice because our interest is, after all, the commercial cinema, and because popular films are the ones which potential readers are most likely to have seen. For the most part, however, the examples are not part of the sample of films which will be studied in detail in later chapters. These are listed in Appendix "A".

4. We are aware that this is a simplification of sorts. In the first place, assuming that political cynicism can reasonably be read into the film, it is not necessarily the case that an indictment of all actual politicians was intended. Such an inference is not farfetched, however, since the film presents us with no contrary instances whatsoever; and clearly in the context of the film, politicians are a self-serving lot.

   Secondly, it is not clear to whom this cynicism can be fairly attributed -- Spielberg, Benchley, or, for that matter, the producers, Richard Zanuck and David Brown. The question of film authorship is one that is briefly considered towards the conclusion of this chapter.

   Finally, one may be "taking the thing too seriously." The self-serving mayor, it can be argued, is only a melodramatic device that serves to keep the beaches open and get swimmers into the water, so audiences can experience the tension and gore that are the real heart of the film. Perhaps. But in choosing plot devices, one chooses their implications. Surely a different statement would be implied, for example, if, in the heat of the July weekend, foolhardy bathers defied a swimming ban which had been wisely declared and courageously enforced by the town fathers.

It is worth noting that the political implications of Jaws were not lost on laymen. The author has had occasion to discuss films at local high schools during the past several years, and, without prompting, it was evident that this content was perceived by many students. Coincidentally, an editorial in The Canadian magazine compared the "serious theme" of Jaws to controversy over radioactive waste disposal sites in the area of Port Hope, Ontario, and likened Port Hope politicians and commercial interests to their film counterparts in Amity. See: Jack Ludwig, "The Port Hope Dilemma: Whether or not to Cry Shark," The Canadian, March 20, 1976, p. 3.

5. While we have not defined the commercial cinema in terms of popularity, the latter variable is an interesting one to consider. It has often been said that politics is the kiss of death at the box office, and one wonders if this is indeed the case. Are those commercial films which are most interesting politically the least likely to succeed financially? Some evidence will be brought to bear on this question.

6. The idea that feature films are carriers of political culture appears, in one guise or another, in a variety of film comment and research including: Jones (1952), Kracauer (1947), Lewin (1971), Melnick (1974), Pickowicz (1974), Huaco (1965), Kanon (1974), and Jarvie (1970). The notion of films being system supportive and system critical is an adaptation of material in Baker (1974). For a useful general discussion of politics in film, see Furhammar and Isaksson (1971), especially pp. 242-247.

7. One must qualify this inference, because, compared with American films, few French films are exhibited in Alberta (commercially or otherwise). So we are dealing with a highly biased sample, and caution must be exercised when speaking of French cinema as a whole. Similarly, the films of Antonioni, Fellini, and Lina Wertmuller are not typical of Italian cinema, though they constitute the entire diet of Italian films for many North Americans.

8. I.C. Jarvie, Towards a Sociology of the Screen World (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1970), pp. 137-138.

9. Ibid., pp. 405. Also quoted in Baker (1974).

10. Joseph Kanon "The Parallax Candidate," *The Atlantic*, August, 1974, p. 85. (Emphasis added.)

11. Quoted in: Stuart M. Kaminsky, *Don Siegel: Director* (New York: Curtis Books, 1974), p. 104.

12. See, for example: Pauline Kael, *Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang*, (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1968), pp. 356-357.

13. Reported in: Stephen Farber, "Coppola and *The Godfather*," Sight and Sound, Vol. 41(4), p. 223.

14. *Walking Tall* was a phenomenally successful movie allegedly based on the life of Sheriff Buford Pusser of McNairy County, Tennessee. The film contrasted, rather sharply with the known facts of Pusser's career, according to Pauline Kael, "The Current Cinema," *The New Yorker*, Feb. 25, 1974, pp. 100-106.

15. Joseph R. Dominick, "Children's Viewing of Crime Shows and Attitudes on Law Enforcement," *Journalism Quarterly*, Vol. 51, pp. 5-12.

16. Depictions of sexual behavior and scenes of realistic violence are evidently, for conservatives and liberals respectively, the major areas of concern about the *effects* of film content. The alleged evil effects of sexual pornography have yet to be demonstrated; see, for example: W. Cody Wilson and Michael J. Goldstein, eds., "Pornography: Attitudes, Use, and Effects," a collection of articles in *The Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 29 (3), (1973). While there is much current interest in the effects of filmed violence, research results are mixed. A communications researcher accurately predicted this in 1963, when he considered the question of whether screen violence increases levels of aggression: "I will offer odds that the final answer will be susceptible of summary in Berelsonian terms, i.e. that some *types* of *depicted violence* will be found to have some *types* of *effects* on the *aggression levels* of *some* types of *children* under *some* types of *conditions*, or -- *yes*, and *no*, both with provisos." Joseph T. Klapper, "Mass Communication Research: An Old Road Resurveyed," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 27 (1963), p. 518.

17. Because of the number of works cited, most references in this chapter will be made using the "keyed bibliography" convention. Elsewhere, and especially when material from a work is quoted directly, complete footnote citations will be given. Because of the large number of individual film reviews cited in Chapters II to IV, a special convention will be used and will be explained in the next chapter.

    The formal/informal dichotomy alluded to in this section is not always a sharp one, and generalizations about each group of studies should be interpreted with some caution. It is not the case, for example, that researchers who employ formal techniques examine entirely superficial content; and those who use informal techniques are not uniformly heedless of external opinions and evidence.

    More important, perhaps, is the fact that materials grouped under each heading vary greatly in subject matter and quality. Some of Dale's analysis, for example, is based only on plot summaries.

    Also, the articles and books discussed are but a small sample of the available film literature and pertain only to content studies. For thorough annotated bibliographies of this literature, see Jarvie (1970) and Rehrauer (1972, 1974 and 1977).

18. Dorothy B. Jones, "Quantitative Analysis of Motion Picture Content," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 6 (1942), p. 417.

19. Ibid., p. 415.

20. Joseph R. Dominick, "Crime and Law Envorcement on Prime-time Television," Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 37(2), p. 250.

21. While it is not exactly clear why formal film content studies are in decline, one suspects the joint effects of two related phenomena: (I) television replaced movies as a target of public concern because it was more pervasive, and seemed to quickly acquire a reputation for being the most "influential" of the mass media; (II) further to this, voluntary and government imposed film classification systems eventually rendered much controversial film content inaccesible to young people, who were widely believed to "impressionable," and most susceptible to the hypothesized evil effects of media. At any rate, these

same young people were spending many more hours in front of television sets than at the movies, and it was only a matter of time before researchers began to wonder, for example, how many acts of violence a child witnessed on prime time television during the course of a single week or a single season.

22. These examples permeate the literature on "problem" or "message" films. Most of them are mentioned, for example, in: Richard Dyer MacCann, "The Problem Film in America," which appears in Film and Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), an anthology edited by MacCann.

23. Leif Furhammar and Folke Isaksson, Politics and Film, tran. Kersti French, (London: Studio Vista, 1971), p. 6.

24. Furhammar and Isaksson seem convinced, however, that some commercial films implicitly betray an ambivalence towards the very attitudes and values they are ostensibly against. The Sound of Music is supposed to be hostile to Nazism, they argue, but in fact glorifies values "not unlike" Nazism. Among these are "a patriarchal view of man and woman," and chauvinistic nationalism. See Ibid., p. 247. The argument is very week.

25. Ibid., p. 244.

26. Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites, Movies: A Psychological Study (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950), pp. 243-244.

27. Siegfried Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), pp. 72, 74.

28. See, for example: Jarvie, Towards a Sociology of the Screen World, pp. 132-133.

29. Raymond William Baker, "Egypt in Shadows," American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 17 (3), pp. 394-395, 415.

30. This notion of the "political" is freely adapted from several sources, principally David Easton, The Political System (New York: Knopf, 1953). The idea of "politically relevant" content embraces phenomena normally discussed under the rubrick "political culture." In particular, see: Robert D. Putnam,

"Studying Elite Political Culture: the Case of 'Ideology'," American Political Science Review, Vol. 65 (1971), pp. 651-652. The perception of what is politically relevant, by a researcher or by an audience, is partly determined by the historical context in which the film is viewed. A film which effectively dramatized the routine and working conditions of an "ordinary" housewife would probably be interpreted as a political statement in the late seventies. The same film might well have been considered void of political interest fifteen or twenty years ago. One suspects that a reciprocal relationship may be involved here: films may reflect some of our concerns, as well as determine what we are concerned about.

31. This research was conducted while the author was a member of the Alberta Film Censorship Board. All commercial films must be viewed, approved and classified by the board prior to any public exhibition in the province.

32. Nashville, for example, was playing locally for a period of several weeks after this research began, though it had been approved well before the viewing period technically started. All the President's Men, on the other hand, was approved shortly after the viewing period technically ended. Since no pretense was being made about the randomness of the sample, it seemed foolishly rigid to exclude from consideration two films of such obvious political interest.

33. The differentiation among several levels of analysis is somewhat similar to a distinction among three classes of statements representing different degrees confirmation, in: Wolfenstein and Leites, Movies, A Psychological Study, pp. 304-307.

34. For Virtually all films in the sample, a minimum of one brief plot summary and/or review has been published. The more interesting films in the sample have been analyzed in a variety of publications. See Appendix 'A'.

35. The auteur theory, in its various manifestations, is not reducible to the mere designation of the director as principal author of a film. Other assumptions and values are involved. For an excellent statement of

these, see Wollen (1969). Andrew Sarris, however, is considered the chief English-language proponent of the theory. See his "Notes on the *Auteur* Theory in 1962," which is reprinted in Sitney (1970). For an effective critique, see Kael (1965).

CHAPTER TWO

SOME POLITICAL ASPECTS OF 'UNPOLITICAL' FILMS

"*Everything*'s politics, honey."
-- Billy Dee Williams

"For you, maybe. Not for me."
-- Diana Ross
(from *Mahogany*)

Introduction and classification scheme

In the present chapter and in the several which follow, two objectives will be kept in mind. First, since it is reasonable to assume that the reader will not have seen most of the films in the sample, we wish to present an overview of the ninety films which have been analyzed. This overview will be accomplished by the useful, if imperfect, device of a classification scheme for films that is based on the prevalence or "quantity" of political content and interest, and on the way that content finds expression -- whether, for example, as a sub-plot in a run-of-the-mill love story, as a subtle undercurrent permeating an ostensibly non-political film, as a relatively clear-cut "message," or as a set of propositions that cannot be reduced to a single, simple message.

Since each of the ninety films cannot be discussed in great detail in this or subsequent chapters, a second objective here will be the explication of our methodology. This will be accomplished by discussing in some detail one or more films from each of the several categories -- in most cases a variety of films, and in some categories, all films -- in order to give the reader an idea of what each film was about and how and why it was categorized this way. We shall begin this chapter with some observations about the reason for, and the limitations of, our classification system, and then proceed to introduce each category beginning with the least politically interesting.

The classification scheme which we have developed is intended primarily as an organizing convenience, a framework around which the sample of films may be discussed with a minimum of the confusion that would result were the films treated, say, in simple alphabetical order. The categories were not logically set out prior to the research, but were devised to accommodate the ninety films at hand; there is no category that includes documentaries, for example, because documentaries were excluded from our sample. In this sense, the categories are incomplete, though the system is useful in at least two respects: (i) it enables us to meaningfully resolve the present sample into five distinct sub-groups which are manageable, from the point of view of organizing the material, and which make some sense in the light of our political interests; (ii) while the system is both crude and specific to the present research, it does lend itself to further modifications and does itself involve finer distinctions than alternatives available in the published literature (e.g., a simple dichotomy between political and non-political films, or between message films and all others, or between films which are system critical or hostile).

It should also be emphasized that the classification scheme to be used in the next several chapters is not the "final word," even for the present research. In the concluding chapter, for example, we shall have occasion to focus our attention exclusively on films in which fictiious (or real) political candidates or office-holders are portrayed. This in itself implies a simple division of the sample into two categories, and so constitutes another kind of classification scheme. Similarly, when one distinguishes between American films and the films of other countries, or between westerns and romantic comedies, other classification schemes are implied (i.e., classifying by country and genre, respectively).[1]

For the moment, a more useful perspective may be achieved by resorting to a classification scheme in which political considerations are consequential. We have incorporated into this system two ideas: one, the notion that there are different _types_ of politically interesting films, and two, the realization that _within_ those types, some films are more interesting than others. The former idea, which is the more important of the two, prompts an initial classification according to type; the second leads to a subdivision of each type into primary and secondary instances of the category in question. Let us illustrate with a simple, hypothetical example. Spy stories constitute a certain type of politically interesting movie, dealing, let us assume, with questions of nationalism, patriotism, state morality, assassination, invasion of privacy, or even government administration. But all spy stories are not of equal political interest. Some go to considerable lengths in exploring those questions, while others are merely "touching the bases." Thus, films that are of the same type vary greatly in interest and significance. (In the classification system to be outlined below, spy stories _per se_ do not constitute a distinct category.)

After some reflection and a number of organizing attempts, the following five categories seemed most suitable as descriptions of the kinds of films appearing in our sample. Each will be defined briefly before further explication throughout this chapter and the two which follow:

i. Films of minimal political interest. This is the simplest category of all, and includes those films which, in our judgement, are of virtually no political interest whatsoever. Primary instances of this category are films with isolated, incidental political material that is unsustained and undeveloped (e.g., The Sunshine Boys), while secondary instances of the category are films barren of even the most trivial political content (Carry On Behind).

ii. Social stratum or sub-culture movies. These are films which, though not typically explicit in their politics, attain some political interest and significance in so far as they dramatize the conditions or life styles of an identifiable sub-group in a society. The sub-group may be defined in terms of conventional demographic variables such as race, ethnic origin, social class, and so on. Primary instances of this category are films in which those conditions are presented in some complexity and with some sophistication (Lies My Father Told Me), while secondary instances are films in which the presentation is brutally brief or simplistic, or quite tangential to the major thrust of the film (Sheba Baby).

iii. Melodramas with politically interesting subplots or implications.[2] This, the second largest category of all, includes films from a variety of conventional movie genres -- romances, comedies, thrillers, Westerns and so on -- in which political or politically relevant content features importantly, but in a clearly subservient relationship to the main thrust of the film. We are speaking here of political content that is rather more substantial than the isolated references alluded to in the "minimal political interest" category, and films which are, at best, only marginally concerned with the circumstances of a sub-group. Primary instances of the melodrama category, as we shall call it, are films in which the political content is more or less straightforwarded and explicit (Mahogany), while secondary instances are films in which the political implications are less substantial or overt (Family Plot).

iv. Issue or message movies. This, of course, is a conventional designation for certain kinds of films and our meaning is similar to the traditional one. Message films, for our purposes, are films involving a preoccupation with a more or less clearly articulated social issue or problem, about which a point of view is presented or stand taken. These differ from sub-culture movies in that the articulation of the message seems more salient than a mere descriptive rendering of the circumstances in which a group finds itself; and the message itself may be pertinent across sub-groups. Primary instances of this category are films in which the message or statement permeates the film (Lipstick), while secondary instances are films in which the message is less obvious and occasionally subservient to other aspects of the film (Lisztomania).

v. Movies which include complex social and political analysis. This, from our perspective, is the most interesting category of all, and includes films which involve -- as a principal aspect of their content -- a view of individuals in society that emphasizes political relationships and values. These are movies which are explicitly and implicitly political, and which are typically complex in imagery and nuance. Analytical movies (our abbreviated designation for this category) contain a wealth of connotations which emphatically cannot be reduced to a more or less simple message; their political content transcends the

> status of sub-plot and their perspective is broader and more unabashedly political than is the case with sub-culture movies. Since films in the analytical category are the elite of our sample, there is a sense in which they are all primary instances. Nonetheless, the latter designation can usefully differentiate the outstanding political statements in this category (e.g., Nashville) from those films which are more borderline cases; The Killer Elite and Three Days of the Condor, for example, can be considered secondary examples in so far as one could reasonably contend that both films are merely melodramas with interesting political subplots, rather than being seriously analytical. (That is not our view, as will be seen in a later chapter.)

This last point illustrates (if any illustration were needed) both the highly subjective nature of these judgements, and the notion that there are grey areas between categories, rather than sharp lines. In particular, the following should be noted: (a) While melodramas, subculture and message films, as we have defined them, are approximations of mutually exclusive categories, the secondary examples of those categories tend to merge with the "minimal political interest" category. (b) While the primary instances of the analytical category clearly transcend the lesser categories, the secondary analytical movies could arguably be designated as melodramas, message or subculture films, as defined above. Diagramatically, we envisage the configuration presented in Figure 1.

Because the categorization of films in this manner is so much a function of intangibles such as taste, interest, and, perhaps, idiosyncratic perceptions, it should come as no surprise that some of our choices will be controversial. A dramatic instance of this might be the designation of Robert Aldrich's tough, brutal police movie, _Hustle_, as analytical, while _The Romantic Englishwoman_ is accorded no such status though it clearly reflects the political convictions of its director, Joseph Losey.

Fig. 1. -- Diagramatic representation of the five categories defined in the text.[3]

	COMPLEX SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ANALYSIS		
Primary Secondary			
Primary Secondary	MESSAGE MOVIES	MELODRAMAS	SUB-CULTURE MOVIES
Primary Secondary	MOVIES OF MINIMAL POLITICAL INTEREST		

This seems inevitable in an enterprise such as this, and -- though our choices are very definitely defensible -- the reader is at liberty to "correct" any alleged injustices to favorite directors. The more important factor is that the classification system is perceived as intelligible and sound, and is understood as the organizing principle it is intended to be.

We shall now put this organizing principle into practice. For the remainder of this chapter we shall concern ourselves with explicating the "lower" three categories, as we discuss films of minimal political interest, subculture movies, and melodramas with politically interesting sub-plots. We will conclude the chapter with some tentative, general observations about this large block of films, many of which will not be referred to again in this work. In subsequent chapters, we shall discuss films in the generally more interesting categories -- issue or message movies, and movies with complex social and political analysis.

Films of minimal political interest

These films, of course, constitute the thinnest possible vein of political content, and we will spend correspondingly little time discussing them. Admittedly, it is possible to "make something" political out of any film, and our awareness of this point should be apparent from the previous chapter. The interpretation of films is a function of both the objective content, and the way that content is used (or processed) by the viewer in the light of his or her experiences, consciousness, and, one supposes, inventiveness. Clearly, however, some interpretations are grounded less in the film content itself than in the subjective appreciation of the viewer. The Sunshine Boys, for example, is a film about two veteran vaudeville comedians --

formerly a team, now separated and feuding -- and a nephew's endeavours to reunite them for a sketch that will be part of a television special. The film can be "experienced" as a poignant statement about the plight of the aged in American society, but there is little in the film that begs or encourages that interpretation; it is, to our knowledge, a highly idiosyncratic view, though the movie incidentally reminds us that aging can be a difficult process.

Also of minimal political interest are three movies which pay sporadic lip service to the anti-psychiatry, anti-medicine theme of exorcism movies -- Beyond the Door, The Devil Within Her, and The Anti-Christ, in which the father of a demonically possessed child says of psychiatrists: "All they can do is put a name on things they can't understand."[4] A minor sex movie, Kitty Can't Help It, includes a passing swipe at racism and a brief parody of evening news programs, before concluding with an unexplained, sarcastic dedication to the "intolerance" of the Screen Actors' Guild. Mary, Mary, Bloody Mary sometimes alludes to, but never develops or explains, the "political implications" of an F.B.I. agent's investigation of a homocide in Mexico. In The Bad News Bears the values of competition and winning at any cost are questioned, in the content of organized children's baseball, but the issues are ultimately side-stepped without any exploration of their broader implications.

Clark Gable and Carole Lombard are patriotic in Gable and Lombard, and they are also seen as courageously defiant of studio authorities and public opinion in the conduct of their love affair. Hindsight helps the film-makers construe Lombard as a somewhat consciously "liberated" woman -- as when she says of her eccentricities: "The damn thing is so set up you can only make it if you have balls ... so I had to grow some." In a more child-like vein, Gene Wilder pokes fun at authority figures in The Adventure of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother, but this is a minor and incidental aspect of the film. Against a Crooked Sky and Pursuit are set in the American West and are of passing interest in their portrayals of Indians -- as noble savages and unpleasant primitives, respectively. Pursuit includes sympathetic references to broken treaties and Wounded Knee, but both films affirm the values of "white," Christian civilization; and Pursuit is especially offensive when, by crosscutting, the Indians and their environment are unfavorably compared with a white settlement -- a cozy town, gleaming church steeple, warmly lit cabin, young, attractive woman taking a pie out of the oven, and so on.

Diamonds and Killer Force are "caper" movies about diamond thefts in Israel and South Africa, respectively. Apart from portrayals of police and security people, one must make whatever politics one can of the fact that the erstwhile thieves in Diamonds have an Arab guide; or that Peter Fonda, in a desert-bound jeep in Killer Force, responds to a radio request to state his position: "I'm opposed to all governments." Killer Force is also notable for senseless blood-letting. Welcome to My Nightmare and Stardust are about rock music performers. Stardust is about the rise and fall of a young pop star, and includes an offhand reference to the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and indications, from time to time, that pop music is an important avenue of social mobility for working class young people in Britain. Welcome to My Nightmare is a concert movie with Alice Cooper; it is politically interesting to the extent that one can be at all serious about Cooper and hosts of British teenagers shouting and singing the likes of: "We're the Department of Youth/We got the power! ... Who's got the power? WE do!"

These, we must reiterate, are very brief and relatively insignificant excepts from films which run anywhere from 75 minutes to two hours or more. Films which we judge to be of no political interest whatsoever are even less promising. One example will suffice. Echoes of a Summer is a reasonably well done film about a middle-aged, well-to-do couple and their relationship with one another and with their twelve year old daughter, who is dying. The movie functions entirely on the level of private sentiment, focusing especially on the father-daughter relationship. It is, quite frankly, a "tearjerker," and barely hints at broader social concerns -- unless one wishes to make something of the couple's comfortable life style, or the fact that they employ a housekeeper who disapproves of them because they are not conventionally religious. Slim prospects indeed.

Films in the minimal political interest category are typified, perhaps, by Watch Out, We're Mad which, for that reason only, is worth considering in a little more detail. The film opens with a stock car race in which 'Ben' (Bud Spencer) and 'Kid' (Terence Hill) are competing.[5] The two tie for first place, but despite their friendship they refuse to share the prize (a dune buggy), preferring to compete further by staging a hot dog eating contest at a nearby fairground. Some thugs arrive and wreak havoc with everything in sight, including the buggy. The fairground, it turns out, is land coveted by a group of property speculators whom the thugs represent. The fair is to be replaced by a skyscraper. Chief among the "bad guys" is an unnamed German doctor (played by Donald Pleasence) with comically exaggerated accent and mannerisms; he is a combination Adolph Hitler/Dr. Strangelove, complete with S.S. insignia and a "hit" man named Paganini (he carries a violin case) who is said to be "the finest exterminator of people in the world." Like a cartoon villain, the doctor is gleefully bad ("evil is a virtue") and incorrigibly power hungry: "You can't rule society," a flabby, incompetent lackey is told, "if you sound like a pussy cat." Nonetheless, the villains are ultimately undone, after an interminable series of clashes with Ben and Kid, mostly involving cars and car wrecks of one kind or another. The doctor is forced to abandon his claim to the fairgound and give the heroes a dune buggy each. The fair re-opens to the delight of children and clowns, while Ben and Kid, having wrecked one of the buggies, resume their friendly rivalry for the other.

Watch Out, We're Mad is overwhelmingly a movie of car chases, car smashes, and comic fist fights, in which the sparse politically relevant content is effectively buried. That property speculators are cast as villains of the piece is barely noticeable; it is mentioned once or twice and never developed beyond the point of simple labeling. The doctor's wickedness elicits only a reflex response identifying him and his henchmen as bad guys who entirely deserve the punishing sub-slapstick treatment they and their property receive at the hands of Ben and Kid. The extermination reference is an instance of bad taste that barely registers over the cacophony of the movies as a whole. Principally, this is a noisy stunt movie about funny men in funny cars.

As one might guess, the film was not extensively discussed in trade and critical journals. It was virtually ignored, and with good reason. David McGillivray wrote a short paragraph for the Monthly Film Bulletin, briefly mentioning that Pleasence "strenuously overplays his role as a poor man's Dr. Strangelove," before writing the film off as "an expansive showcase for the athletic prowess of 'Terence Hill' and the reckless bravery of Remy Julienne and his équipe." (Remy Julienne, as many filmgoers will know, is a stunt driver and co-ordinator.)

We will conclude this section with a more interesting and more problematical example -- François Truffaut's splendid film, The Story of Adèle H. The "Adèle H." of the title is the surviving daughter of Victor Hugo (a second daugther had drowned). The film chronicles Adèle's obsessive love for English army Lieutenant Pinson, with whom she had had a brief affair, and who responds throughout the film with a complete disinterest that is only sporadically displaced by flashes of anger, irritation, and embarrassment. At the beginning of the film it is 1863 and Adèle has followed Pinson to Nova Scotia against his knowledge and in defiance of her family. She doggedly continues her quest throughout the remainder of the film, pledging undying love in spite of every rebuff, and degrading herself to the point of offering him money to gamble with and a woman to sleep with. "I'll to what you wish," Adèle tells Pinson "I will obey you completely .... Do with me whatever you will." By the end of the film she has followed him to Barbados where we see her wandering the streets in rags, apparently incapable of recognizing him even at a close distance, but no less zealous in her commitment. Pinson, for his part, is now a captain, married, and apprenhensive about the social ramifications of Adèle's presence. A black woman in the native quarter, where Adèle lives, writes Hugo to advise him of his daughter's state, and a concluding voice-over narration explains that Adèle spent the remainder of her life -- forty years -- in an asylum.

All of this suggests, as one critic has put it, "an ordinary tragedy of unrequited love" -- or, given Adèle's tenaciousness and descent into madness, an extra-ordinary tragedy of unrequited love. It is, according to Kael, a film "about a woman who is destroyed by her passion for a man who is indifferent to her -- a woman who realizes herself in self-destruction." Certainly, in our judgement, the film is overwhelmingly about a peculiarly heroic madness -- love without reason or "common sense" and not in the least dependent upon the reciprocity of the loved one. Moreover, the object of Adèle's obsession seems entirely resistible, and fundamentally uninteresting. Adèle is devoted to love as a thing in itself: "Let love be my religion," she says at one point, and we see her, in her room, before an improvised altar to Pinson's photograph.

The political interest in The Story of Adèle H. stems from two related aspects of the film. Truffaut is careful, first of all, to allude to Hugo as a man of political convictions who had risked his life opposing a coup that overthrew the Republic; a one-time peer of France and People's Representative, he has been exiled to the isle of Guernsey. Unseen, he is still a presence in the film because of his benevolent letters to Adèle, and, more importantly, because she is dependent upon him for money. It is clear, however, that Truffaut wants us to reflect upon the reputation of this unseen presence -- as when the Barbados woman addresses Hugo as a "defender of the oppressed" in a letter alerting him to the seriousness of his own daughter's condition; and in the concluding narration, when Adèle's sorry fate is contrasted with Victor Hugo's later triumphs and extravagant burial.

At the same time, Adèle herself is seen as an unquestionably courageous woman who, in spite of her groveling -- if not because of it -- is consciously critical of her social status as a woman. This is rendered explicitly at one point, when she writes in her diary: "My sisters suffer in bordellos or in marriage: let them have liberty and dignity." This remark -- an actual excerpt from Adèle Hugo's diary, on which the film is based -- is startling, of course, given the totality of her devotion to Pinson, her offer to be a dutiful wife, and her willing degradation throughout the film. Gillian Parker Klein, in a Film Quarterly review that is prefaced by the "bordellos" quote, makes much of this contradiction, and argues that "Adèle Hugo's life is to be seen as epitomizing aspects of women's situation in general; that Truffaut is critically examining the destructive effect of the dominating images and personae of her period on a woman." Adèle's contradictions, says Klein, are the contradictions of the Romantic era:

> The real dynamic of Adèle's odyssey is not Pinson but her own revolt, and the film respects her courage and tenacity: she travels alone over oceans and continents; leaving home secretly, her only support an allowance, she lives on the brink of destitution; she holds out against contempt, indifference, and social condemnation; even at the end, alone, mad, and in rags, she is still alive and defiant. On the other hand it is evident that her energy is misdirected, and brings not liberation but further entrapment....Her rebellion, spurred by the times, is channelled by the times into the conventional search of the love-lorn maid for the soldier-seducer.

The film's ending -- Hugo triumphant, and Adèle locked up -- symbolizes, for Klein, the failure of the French "bourgeois" revolution to liberate its daughters.

From our own comments, and from Klein's persuasive review, it is clear that Truffaut's film at a minimum raises questions of political interest, and at a maximum presents a thorough dissection of the plight of a woman torn between the ideals of a revolutionary age and the limitations of her status as woman. In our judgement, the less grandiose interpretation is more appropriate. In the first place, the status-of-women view probably places undue emphasis on the admittedly intriguing statement about bordellos and marriage -- but it is the only remark of its kind in the entire film. Secondly, Klein's interpretation hinges importantly on material about Hugo, or about the Romantic era, that is not in the film. While that is legitimate up to a point (Truffaut, no doubt, presumes we know something about these matters), one does run the risk of converting film criticism into literary criticism or literary history. Klein's review, which is otherwise cinematically astute, suffers on that account. Our feeling is that Truffaut is speaking more of love than politics, and more about the psychology of an individual woman than of a woman representative of her sex. While ours may be the more orthodox view of The Story of Adèle H., and why we include it among films of minimal political interest, it is worth remembering that Klein's critique, at this writing, is the best single analysis of Truffaut's unusual, provocative film.

Social stratum or sub-culture movies

To the extent that one sees Adèle Hugo's life as "epitomizing aspects of women's situation in general," the film might be more appropriately classified, in our terms, as a sub-culture movie. These, we have suggested, are films which derive their political interest by virtue of a dramatization of the plight -- or privileges -- of a more or less clearly delineated group in a society, without necessarily relating the group's status to politics in the narrow, governmental sense.

Aaron Loves Angela, for example, is a love story about a black teenage boy and his Puerto Rican girl friend. The film acquires political interest in so far as it attends to the details of the material and social environment of its protagonists. It is largely Aaron's story and dramatizes the tensions between his father's ambitions for him, and the boy's own ambitions and limitations. His father is a dejected former All-American football player (currently running "Ike's All-American Eatery" and a joke to some of his patrons), and he sees basketball greatness in Aaron's future, though the boy has neither the ability nor the ambition. Angela, the Puerto Rican girl, also has ambitions that are larger than Aaron's: "I don't want to spend the rest of my life here in Harlem," she admonishes him at one point, "I know there are better places."

L Aaron becomes involved with a black narcotics dealer who had once helped him out of a jam -- a confrontation with a Puerto Rican gang -- and to whom he owes a favor. But the dealer is killed in a shoot-out with henchmen of the white-dominated "mob." Before dying, he gives Aaron $250,000 of mob money and some advice: "That's what livin' in this jungle will do for you, man. This is the way out. Take it and run like hell." Since he isn't going to be a basketball player, and since -- by his father's reckoning -- only "points and money" matter, Aaron wants to keep the money. While Angela and his father prevail upon him to be honest, the film degenerates into extreme brutality, especially when a mobster questions a friend of Aaron about the boy's whereabouts. After a pursuit by the mobsters, Aaron and Angela throw the money from a pedestrian overpass, and the villains watch helplessly while passersby grab what they can. A freeze frame shows the couple smiling and happy.

Apart from the obvious question of what a real mobster would do to a couple of teenagers who threw away a quarter of a million dollars, the film leaves much unresolved. In particular, we do not know about the boy's future, which seems to involve neither points nor money, and we are left with the unsatisfying but too familiar feeling that somehow romantic love will triumph over all.

Visually, the film strives for a harsh, realistic urban texture (with soft, romantic interludes), including, for example, a shot of a "middle income" urban renewal project ironically juxtaposed with condemned buildings, run down tenements, concrete, pavement, and garbage. As with many "black exploitation" films, the skin tones of caucasians seem to be a statement in themselves: almost always pinkish, mean and sickly looking.

A better film about American blacks is Cooley High, which also indulges in nostalgia for the 1960's (like American Graffiti), complete with pranks, period dress, and music. The main character, a young man named "Preach," wants to be a poet, or at least "somethin' besides a factory worker or a football player." His mother collects welfare, and apparently holds three jobs just to make ends meet. (The father does not appear in the film, though his absence, by our recollection, is never explained.) Preach wants to go to college -- an ambition his mother does not understand and is not sympathetic towards. Unlike his American Graffiti counterparts, for whom college was an available, though not always desired option, there is some question as to whether Preach will be able to go to college. A scholarship and an encouraging teacher ("What do you want? Whatever it is knowledge will get it for you.... You got brains, potential....") help to overcome that problem. This film, too, strives for an atmosphere of grim realism, with a montage of slum scenes and the introduction of a fatally brutal beating into the proceedings. Like American Graffitti, Cooley High concludes with a description of what became of its characters, but here too, options seem to be more limited: though Preach has become a successful screenwriter, one of his friends is a factory worker, one an army sergeant, and one was killed during an outbreak of "race violence" in 1968; his high school girl friend is a librarian, and two of his enemies were killed in a gas station hold-up.

Dolemite and Sheba Baby are lesser examples of this genre, being more routine crime pictures with some political overtones. In Sheba Baby, Pam Grier[6] is a former police-woman, now a private detective. Her father operates a legitimate ghetto loan company ("a true financial friend") that the ubiquitous mob wants to take over. Other businesses have gone under, and, since the police won't do anything, Ms. Grier must carry the day. Dolemite is the name of a black man wrongly convicted of narcotics possession -- apparently on the basis of evidence planted by the police. He is released from prison on the understanding that he will help the F.B.I. break up a gang of racketeers terrorizing the city. Both Dolemite and Sheba Baby include incidental and explicit references to slum conditions and to the status of blacks in American society. In particular, ghetto blacks are portrayed as victims of white-run organized crime which flourishes because of the indifference or complicity of the police. The main loan shark in _Sheba Baby_ is a white racist (he refers to blacks as "trash") who owns an insurance company, and the head racketeer in _Dolemite_ (who is called "Mr. Big"!) is a white politician. Mr. Big is apparently intended to be Mayor Daley of Chicago, where the film is set, since Daley's name appears to be repeatedly mouthed by characters in the film though it's "bleeped out" on the soundtrack. _Dolemite_ also includes a crude analogy with the Watergate scandal: "Just look at that Watergate scandal," says a preacher to his congregation. "If the leader of our country is stealing and getting away clean, what do they expect _us_ to do? We live here with the rats and 'roaches...."

Two films that are rather different examples of the sub-culture category are _The Romantic Englishwoman_ and _Charlotte_, which are about a more privileged social stratum, namely the allegedly bored -- and boring -- bourgeoisie. The lesser of these films is _Charlotte_, written and directed by, and starring, Roger Vadim. Charlotte is the promiscuous, hedonistic, fashionably left-wing daughter of a French government official who is identified as a "Secretary." In flashback form, the film is structured around attempts by the Vadim character to write a book about Charlotte's death. It turns out that she was killed by the son of "a pillar of German politics," after she had been persuaded that orgasm at the moment of death was the ultimate sexual thrill. Charlotte's political convictions, and those of her friends, never get beyond simple descriptions or absurd caricatures; at one point, for example, she is married to a homosexual film critic who has lines like: "I like the subway and the smell of workers." The film is included as a minor example of subculture movies because of its explicit and implicit view of bourgeois life as opulent, trendy, decadent, and, ultimately, empty and boring.

Joseph Losey's The Romantic Englishwoman is somewhat better. Lewis Fielding (Michael Caine) is a successful novelist of working class origins currently writing a screenplay about a woman who leaves her husband and "goes off to France or Germany to find herself." His own wife, Elizabeth (Glenda Jackson), is on holiday in Baden-Baden where she meets Thomas Hursa (Helmut Berger), a drug dealer and gigolo with whom she may have had an affair. (It is never clear whether she did, or whether the scene is imagined by Lewis for his screenplay, or both.) When Thomas's hidden drug cache is accidentally washed away by rain -- water/purification symbolism abounds in the Baden-Baden sequences -- he shows up at the Fieldings' house, describing himself as a poet and admirer of Lewis's work; and believing poets to be "the world's honored guests," he sponges shamelessly, even to the point of getting five pounds a week pocket money. The mid-section of the film covers Thomas's life with the Fieldings and their fascination with him, and invites us to acknowledge his superiority to them. "Owners," he tells them, as he sits in impeccably tailored clothes, "are under the pressure of ownership, hanging on to everything....and all the time you are being robbed of your life." "The bourgeois life has its compensations," says Lewis to Thomas over brandy and cigars, and Thomas replies: "What would it be without them?" The question is rhetorical, the answer is "empty."

The water imagery at Baden-Baden gives way to an excess of mirror imagery and other reflecting surfaces at the Fieldings' house, because, in Losey's words, "I wanted to convey that their reality was totally unreal."[7] Elizabeth is much taken with their house guest, presumably because he represents her notion of freedom from oppressive material well-being. "My life is so comfortable," she says at one point, but she means it as a complaint, much as ordinary mortals might talk about a painful backache. She eventually leaves with Thomas, and they are pursued by Lewis, and by Thomas's erstwhile underworld connections. After Thomas is captured, presumably to be killed, Lewis and Elizabeth return to their bourgeois house where -- irony of ironies -- a party they had arranged at the beginning of the film is already in progress.

For all its pretentions, The Romantic Englishwoman impresses us as being politically facile and difficult to swallow. Indeed, the politics of the film are barely more convincing than the most tedious money-can't-buy-happiness melodrama, and we are asked to suffer the added discomfort of identifying with a major character who is fundamentally unlikeable. Apparently, we are expected to accept at face value that material possessions actively negate happiness, though the film takes no pains to dramatize or argue this point; boredom, for example, is asserted rather than explained. The best short statement about the film's failure is from Jonathan Rosebaum's Monthly Film Bulletin review:

> Too many assumptions about the 'emptiness' of Elizabeth's and Lewis' lives are taken to be self-evident and not worthy of exposition or elucidation, while Thomas curiously winds up serving as a more improbably fantasy figure for the audience -- quasi-inept drug-dealing gigolo as Authentic Existential Hero -- than he does for the Fieldings.

The sub-culture in Hazel's People is defined not by social standing or skin color, but by religious affiliation. The film is an oddity in our sample in that it has clear overtones of religious indoctrination; it was shot on location at a Mennonite community, with the active participation of members of the community -- in leading roles, and as extras. Eric, a "student activist" or "hippie" -- the terms are used interchangeably in the film -- visits the community, in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to attend the funeral of his Mennonite friend, John, who has been killed in a violent confrontation with New York police. John had been harboring an A.W.O.L. military friend. Eric is befriended by Eli -- described as a "holy man, a man of God" -- and by Eli's daughter, Hazel, who was to have married John. Eric stays in the community for a time, and the film becomes essentially a continuing dialogue between Eric and Eli, with occasional set-pieces to illustrate the Mennonite way of life (a barn-raising and a church service, for example).

The dialogue is a little dated. Eric and his dead companion were anti-war activists who had been involved, also, in a move to pressure "the university and the city" to clean up a slum area after a series of incidents in which babies were bitten by rats. Though Eric has apparently been involved in violent incidents (this is not clear in the film), he does not so much condone violence as account for it: "They're angry because they see so much human misery," he says of activists, "and frustrated by inhuman conditions they can't do anything about." Eric's character, as interpreted by Eli, is compassionate and idealistic, but poisoned by impatience, anger, and hate. Eli, and many of his congregation, are stereotypes of pious understanding, love, and boundless patience.

A revealing exchange occurs, for example, when Eric confronts Eli over the matter of Rufus, a church member, renting unheated shacks at exorbitant rates to migrant Puerto Rican workers. (These same workers are reported to have caused some trouble earlier, but, according to Rufus, they were pacified by a Spanish-speaking evangelist.) Eli acknowledges that the shacks are "a bad thing," but he adds: "You expect too much of us, Eric. And we disappoint you." John's mother explains that Rufus "needs to be loved. But he's too proud to accept. Don't let Rufus make you angry. You can do so much good when you're not angry." But Eli's conscience has been stricken; it is later reported that he has "spoken" to Rufus, the shacks have been torn down, and Eli has found jobs for the men.

The film tries to convey a warm, homey life-style complete with rustic faces, clean overalls, hearty meals, and a simple "neighbor-helping-neighbor" atmosphere that is only occasionally and temporarily marred by the kinds of blemishes described above. (To be fair, though, some blemishes are shown.) Eric is meant to be seduced by this life-style, because these values are consistent with his own "hippie" philosophy. Though he is attracted to the community, the film concludes with his departure. No longer angry, no longer full of hate, and having been an acknowledged "inspiration" to Eli, he returns to the city: "I belong there. Maybe this time I can do some good." Symbolically -- or so one assumes -- in the process of losing his anger and hatred, he has also had his hair considerably shortened, and has lost the mustache he was sporting at the beginning of the film. If romantic love was the uncomfortable panacea in Aaron Loves Angela, divine love is the equally unconvincing savior in Hazel's People. As bad as the film is -- and it is not very well done -- one cannot help feeling that the de-fanged Eric will be even less successful at keeping rats from babies than was his militant former self.

Finally, in this category, we have two films about immigrants -- one set in America, the other in Canada. The less politically interesting of the two is Hester Street, a film about immigrant Russian Jews on New York's lower East Side in 1896. A young man named Jake, a sewing machine operator, spends his evenings at a dancing academy socializing with Mamie, who after seven years in America, has assimilated some of the worst aspects of the new culture. Presently, Jake's wife, Gitl, arrives in America with their son. Gitl dresses drably, wears an orthodox wig, and is generally very slow and reluctant to adapt to the new way of life. When Jake continues to see Mamie, Gitl spends more and more time talking to Bernstein, a co-worker of Jake's who is boarding with them. Bernstein is quiet, bookish, and more at home with the traditional way of life. Ultimately, Jake asks for a divorce, but Gitl manages to acquire all of Mamie's savings as part of the settlement. And so, the shy, orthodox Gitl and her scholarly husband-to-be, Bernstein, are able to buy a grocery store, while modernistic, materialistic Jake and his worldly dancer must postpone their own entrepreneurial plans and engage in more belt-tightening.

Hester Street is a well-done, charming film of passing political interest in its treatment of problems of assimilation, and the clash of materialistic and traditional values. It conveys a sense of regret about the loss of worthwhile values by the absorption of a group into the cultural mainstream, though the mainstream seems unnecessarily stereotyped as crassly commercial. In portraying immigrant life, the film shows crowded living quarters, bustling streets, and hard working men and women who are confident, for the most part, that the social pyramid is fluid -- that workers can become bosses, and aristocrats can wind up at sewing machines. The film is curiously ambivalent in one respect, in that we are obviously expected to deplore the coarseness and values of the materialists, while taking satisfaction in the fact that Gitl and Bernstein succeed on the materialists' terms. (This has its counterpart in Hazel's People, when pains are taken to show that a pious Mennonite is also a shrewd businessman.)

Lies My Father Told Me is about a Jewish family living in Montreal Ghetto in the 1920's; it is from a screenplay by Ted Allan, who appears in the film, and was directed by Jan Kadar, an ex-patriot Czech. A six-year-old boy, David, enjoys a warm, happy relationship with his maternal grandfather, an occasional junk dealer who makes his rounds in a wagon pulled by a weather-beaten horse. The horse is billeted, to the annoyance of some neighbors, in a stable near the house where David lives with his parents and grandfather. David's father, Harry Herman, is a tailor -- an ambitious, optimistic failure who dreams of the wealth and social status that will come from one or more of his get-rich-quick schemes, the latest being a primitive, unsuccessful version of permanent press pants. Harry is jealous of David's relationship with the grandfather, embarrassed by the old man's trade, and resentful of his own dependence on him for periodic financing. (The boy's long-suffering mother is a lesser figure in all this; she comforts the boy and helps mediate the conflict between the two men.) David frequently accompanies the grandfather on his rounds, and has the world explained to him in imaginative, poetic terms that contrast sharply with the father's single-minded devotion to science, engineering, and material progress. In the end, the grandfather dies and David's childhood is effectively over. The grandfather's horse and wagonload of "junk" are replaced by a truck bearing the identification of a new commercial venture: "Harry Herman's Antiques."

In terms of political interest, Lies my Father Told Me is similar to Hester Street, with its clear preference for the patriarchal wisdom of the grandfather over the status-seeking opportunism of the father. In both films the spokesmen for "progress" impress us as being foolish; and both films present a sentimentalized, well-scrubbed view of poverty and hardship -- so much so, that one wonders at times why any sane man would dream of permanent press pants and a one-way ticket to Westmount. These are limitations which have been alluded to elsewhere: in a moderately favorable review of Hester Street, Pauline Kael says of Jake, the materialist: "The film -- nostaligic for what the immigrants lost -- never shows us that there are grounds for Jake's wanting to be Americanized. Instead, he's a fool, abandoning a jewel for a flashy paste-work imitation of 'class'." (Emphasis added.) And Sylvia Millar, in the Monthly Film Bulletin, calls Lies My Father Told Me a "nostalgic, morally black and white fairy-tale, which sermonises about the bad effect of immigration on the integrity of a Jewish family, but has few reasoned observations to make about the problems of a poor immigrant minority."

The films are also similar in this respect: the financial success of the traditionalists in Hester Street is paralleled in Lies My Father Told Me, when it becomes clear that the grandfather has capital and must reluctantly finance some of Harry's schemes. (This, we infer, is what comes from buying bottles for a penny each and selling them for two.) The sensitive philosopher-poet shows himself to be more economically adept than the crass, would-be industrialist.

Lies My Father Told Me is singularly noteworthy among films in this category, however, in its inclusion of a character who is a self-styled Marxist-Leninist. He is Mr. Baumgarten, a tailor who lives in the neighborhood, and his Marxism is treated with bemused tolerance rather than seriousness. Mr. Baumgarten is constantly giving Leninist tracts to the grandfather, whom he believes to be a kindred spirit -- a nice man whose humanism and tolerance are surely symptomatic of unconscious Leninism -- and is always ready to engage the old man in political discussions: "Which is the bigger crime, to rob a bank or to open a bank?" he asks at one point. And in another discussion: "The prophets were wise but they couldn't foresee the rise of capitalism....The working class is today's Messiah." But the grandfather's politics are otherworldly, we learn, when he tells the boy of a future society into which the Messiah will come -- a society in which no man will be too rich and have too much, and no man will be too poor and have too little. Chiefly, then, Baumgarten emerges as a funny eccentric who is more than redeemed by his personal humanitarian qualities -- as when he joins the grandfather in denouncing the police when they attempt to enforce regulations regarding the location of stables near dwellings: "What politician does he have to pay off to get out of this?"

Having considered the several films in this category in some detail, it seems reasonable to presume that the reader will have a firm grip on what the designation "sub-culture" means. In particular, it should be kept in mind that the archetypal sub-culture movie is as much about a group and its "way of life,"[8] as it is about sensational events in the lives of its major characters. With some exceptions, political content tends to be more implicit than explicit and at least one step removed from relating the group's status to the major institutions of government. It will be seen, presently, that these characteristics are quite different from those which define our next category of films.

Melodramas with politically interesting sub-plots

The melodramas, to use a less cumbersome term, are of a kind in several respects. As a group, they involve political and politically relevant content that is more substantial than that found in films of minimal political interest (though the secondary melodramas are not always clearly distinct from films in the minimal political interest category). At the same time, political content in melodramas is clearly subservient to the main aspects and attractions of the stories, which involve neither a sustained portrayal of the favorable or adverse circumstances of a sub-group, nor a substantial treatment of a politically interesting issue. These are films about intrigue, crime, romance, action and adverture, and the political content never gets in the way of "the story."

Because of the large number of films in this category, let us conveniently separate them into primary and secondary examples and dispense with the latter immediately. Over half the secondary melodramas are movies involving crime and detection. The Blackbird and Peeper, for example, feature private detectives as main characters. The Blackbird is an unsuccessful update and spoof of The Maltese Falcon, with a contemporary Sam Spade Jr. operating out of a black ghetto -- "spade" jokes abound -- and doing battle with a dwarf "Hitler." Spade's companion for part of the film is a thug who describes himself as a conservative after objecting to Spade's reference to the police as "pigs." None of this amounts to very much, and the film is only marginally more interesting than those in the minimal political interest category. Peeper plays it more or less straight, and features a British private detective working in Los Angeles in 1947. The convoluted plot centers around a search for a missing person, and the film is politically interesting only inasmuch as the detective (Michael Caine, predictably enough) assumes a "working class hero" stance; there are sporadic sarcastic references to rich people throughout the film.

Class distinctions are also an implicit element in Alfred Hitchcock's Family Plot, in which an unemployed actor, now a cab driver, and his wife, a fake medium, match wits with a suave gem dealer cum kidnapper and his attractive female companion. The taxi driver and his wife are tracking down the missing heir to a fortune; this turns out to be the kidnapper, though he himself doesn't know it and presumes his illegal activities are the cause of the couple's curiosity. When, in the course of his investigations, the taxi driver tries to pass himself off as a lawyer, disparaging references to the legal profession become a recurring joke.

Sudden Fury has as one of its central characters another get-rich-quick Canadian dreamer (cf. The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz, Lies My Father Told Me). But this character, Fred, is emotionally troubled and insanely jealous of his wife, Janet, whose inheritance is supposed to finance his "hare-brained schemes" (her terms). After a car accident brought on by Fred's reckless driving, Janet is left for dead, and Fred secretly and successfully sabotages a passing motorist's attempts to rescue her. Other killings occur after Fred and the helpful passerby wind up at a farm house and try to implicate one another in Janet's death. Ultimately, the occupants of the house are killed either deliberately (by Fred) or accidentally (by the motorist). When the police finally arrive, an array of circumstantial evidence, coupled with Fred's loud insistence, results in the arrest of the innocent man "on suspicion of murder." Fred is charged with careless driving and leaving the scene of an accident -- "for the time being," anyway, according to the police. The falsely accused murderer is told: "If you're telling the truth, you've got nothing to worry about. It's as simple as that." And the audience, if it cares at this point, is left to speculate as to whether justice will prevail.

The Four Deuces, Las Vagas Lady, The Zebra Force, and Lucky Lady are, in varying degrees, sympathetic towards lawbreakers *per se*, as distinct from police, detectives, for innocent victims such as the accused murderer in Sudden Fury. The Four Deuces is an unlikely story about a young, crusading newspaper reporter who -- in the process of doing a story on gangster Vic Morrano -- comes to sympathize with and like the mobster. (Incredibly, the reporter's investigations include on the spot coverage of slayings of rival gangsters!) The gang leader is portrayed in the film as wealthy and powerful, but friendless and sad -- a man of working class origins who struggled to get to the top. Police corruption is thorough. In Las Vegas Lady, one male and three female hotel employees plan and execute the robbery of the hotel penthouse that is the residence of their boss -- a "slimy, mean bastard" who treats his employees badly. Throughout the film, there is a workers-versus-bosses undercurrent that is manifested, for example, when the hero is fired; he hits an aggressive "big shot" who is involved in a scuffle with an innocent young man and he is dismissed at once -- though he had been due to retire in six months. Notwithstanding these difficulties, the successful robbery will enable the hero to realize his dream -- the purchase of a $250,000 ranch. The Zebra Force is a rather nasty film in which a platoon of U.S. Vietnam veterans wreaks vigilante havoc at home. They are, we are told, "an excellent kill team. It's the only thing they know." Primarily they are motivated by loyalty to their dead lieutenant who promised the, after he had been disfigured in a mine explosion: "We'll have more than a monthly pension or a Purple Heart to Pay for our sweat." They take it upon themselves to systematically slaughter "known" gangsters in a series of commando raids.

Lucky Lady is Stanley Donen's film about three rum-runners -- two men and a woman -- who operate along the U.S. - Mexican coast in the 1930's. Clair, played by Liza Minnelli, is the prime mover of the group, and her stated ambition is to "spend as much time being rich as I did being poor." Loved by both men (Burt Reynolds and Gene Hackman), she spurs them on to greater achievement, though she leaves them temporarily for a wealthy companion when she suspects they "don't have the balls for success." But she is soon disenchanted with the good life, and returns to the two loveable crooks. Meanwhile, a confrontation has been developing between the nasty, organized, big-time smugglers in their large, fierce ships, and the romantic, independent, small-time operators in their endearing, colorful little boats. (The good guys in this film are self-consciously romantic: referring to the leader of the gangsters, one of the independent operators complains that "McTeague wants to take all the sport and romance out of this business.") Not surprisingly, the independents prevail. The obvious metaphorical implications of this scenario -- "big shots" versus "little guys," business versus labor, and so on -- are occasionally supplemented by the presence of a representative of state power. He is a comically portrayed coast guard captain whose utter ineffectiveness is matched by his complete devotion to duty: "If the government banned hymn books tomorrow, I'd shoot the first guy who sang 'Nearer My God to Thee'."

Somewhat unusual among this group of films is The Night Caller, a French-Italian co-production and one of only two films in the entire sample having a policeman as the hero. The Night Caller is a warmed-over "tough cop" movie in the tradition of The French Connection and The Seven-Ups, and it makes or implies the usual points about the alleged ineffectiveness of civilized police procedures, and the presumed need for brutal, omniscient super-cops to eliminate society's "scum."

Of the remaining secondary melodramas, two might be deemed Hollywood nostalgia films. Hearts of the West, set in the 1930's, is about a farm boy who wants to write Western stories and winds up on a team of extras and stunt men making cowboy movies in Hollywood. Quite a good movie, Hearts of the West acquires some limited political interest by virtue of its 1930's social atmosphere, and its portrayal of extras and stunt men as the lower class of the movie colony. Their social status and dreams of big money -- "independent wealth" -- are appropriately symbolized by their rear-guard position in a motorcade returning from some location shooting: "They're up there somewhere," says one of the extras wistfully, "In the Buick. That's where the money is." Goodbye, Norma Jean, an awful movie about Marilyn Monroe, manages to crudely overstate the case for Norma Jean's unhappy, insecure childhood with its endless stream of lecherous, pawing men. The film includes an occasional crass attempt to construe Ms. Monroe's tragic life as symbolic of the general condition of working women -- as when Norma Jean, after fellating a producer, express the disgust of "every girl who ever had to kneel before slimy scum like you for work."

Sexual politics also figure in I Will... I Will... For Now, in which a divorced couple re-marries, this time with the benefit of a contractual agreement. Basically a romantic situation comedy, the film also tries to score some points at the expense of the sex clinic culture (the couple checks into one such clinic, only to find that their room has a large, blinking neon sign that reads "There is Nothing Unnatural") and boorish materializm (the hero, who is rich, examines his ex-wife's new bracelet and deems it "a good hedge against inflation. What did it cost?").

Breakheart Pass and The Legend of Earl Durand both look like westerns, though the former is more of a mystery story and the latter is acutally set in 1939.

Breakheart Pass is a Charls Bronson picture with an intricate but not very interesting plot about the smuggling of rifles and dynamite to Fort Humboldt, a shipping point for California gold and silver in the 1870's. The smuggled goods, which are to aid an outlaw gang in seizing and holding the fort, are on a military train, as is Bronson, an undercover secret service agent. It turns out that many of the people on the train are actually in league with the outlaws, and this includes an insufferable governor named Fairchild who is described by the military commander of the train -- a good guy -- as a "piss ass politician." (This is a view of politicians that we will discuss further is a subsequent chapter.)

The Legend of Earl Durand is set in Wyoming and the title character is a "rugged but gentle" mountain man who, we are told, acquired a Robin Hood reputation during the thirties by poaching and distributing government elks. Most of the beneficiaries of Earl's poaching loved him, but there were those who hated him "when dependence on Earl threatened their pride." Earl's major headache is Sheriff Jack McQueen, a stickler for the law who is running for re-election against a relatively liberal opponent. Earl is captured and is sentenced to six months in jail after McQueen "spoke to" the judge. But our hero cannot live in a cage, as he explains to a friend: "[If a] Man ain't free, Luther, he might as well be dead." (Curiously, his friend asks him if he would go "over there" and fight if he had to -- a reference to the outbreak of war in Europe -- but Earl doesn't reply.) After escaping from jail, Earl accidentally kills a deputy sheriff during a confrontation, and a lengthy persuit ensues. As is conventional by now in "tracker" movies,[9] the motives and morals of the trackers often seem to be as questionable as those of the fugitive. In the end, Earl is trapped in a bank which he had been robbing, and -- after reiterating his "Man ain't free" statement -- he shoots himself in the head.

Finally in this set of secondary melodramas, is The Pick-up, a relatively slick sex movie which occasionally seems to aspire to larger things. The hero, Chuck, is driving a motorhome to Florida for his boss -- a stereotypical "redneck" who cannot seem to get through a sentence without a dated reference to "damn demonstrators and peace marchers." Chuck picks up two hitchhikers, Carol and Maureen, and the three of them get literally and symbolically lost. This is a Johnny-come-lately youth cult film in which a romp in the Florida swamps signifies freedom from overbearing parents, redneck bosses, and hypocritical conventional morality. The point of the movie is underscored again and again in a series of Maureen's dreams/visions/ memories (she is a believer in Tarot cards, astrology, mystical religion, and so on); she is visited," for example, by a lisping, pink-suited Senator Max McIver whose signs and pamphlets absurdly dramatize the shallowness and opportunism of his views (1000% Pro-Abortion," "1000% Anti-Abortion," and so on.)

Rather more substantial political content is evident in the group of films we've designated primary instances of the melodrama category, and these movies will be considered in a little more detail. The primary melodramas include a distinct cluster of seven films dealing with national or international intrigue and adventure, plus an odd assortment of four films including an historical spoof (Royal Flash), a "disaster" picture (The Hindenberg), a romantic comedy (It Seemed Like A Good Idea At The Time), and a straight romance (Mahogany). These four films will be dealt with first.

Royal Flash is a disappointing Richard Lester film concerning the exploits of Captain Harry Flashman (Malcolm McDowell), a character created by novelist George MacDonald Fraser, who also wrote the screenplay. Much of the plot concerns Flashman's unwitting and/or unwilling involvement in Otto von Bismarck's stated dream of uniting the German states into a Reich. Part of Bismarck's plan is to implicate the British in murderous plotting in the Duchy of Strakenz, thus providing him, he says, with an excuse to take over during the confusion. The Duchess of Strakenz is supposed to marry Crown Prince Karl Magnus of Oldenberg, who is Flashman's look alike. Flashman is persuaded to impersonate the prince and marry the duchess, while the real Karl Magnus is allegedly recuperating from venereal disease. In fact, the real prince is in captivity, and the plan is to kill him and Flashman, then exposing the latter as a foreign agent. Matters are further complicated for Flashman by the activities of an underground movement dedicated to maintaining the independence of Stragenz, since members of the movement are agressively wise to the fack that Flashman is an imposter; and by the rather unpredictable opportunism of Hungarian Rudi von Starnberg, an erstwhile henchman of Bismarck.

Though Flashman is comparatively innocent in these political machinations, he is hardly innocent in other respects. He is a cowardly, shallow, British chauvinist with an heroic reputation that is a consequence of accidental occurrences which are quickly exploited to his own advantage. In the opening sequence, for example, Lester intercuts a school headmaster's description of Flashman's patriotic exploits, with a scene in which Flashman blunders into heroism while trying to hand the Union Jack over to some very un-British opponents. Throughout the film, Flashman's contempt for foreigners is manifested -- as when Bismarck et al, are variously referred to as "dirty foreigners," "cabbage-eating hounds," "squareheads," and so on. The film also scores some easy points at the expense of royalty, who are portrayed as clumsy, snobbish, ungrateful, and unworthy of the heroic efforts made on their behalf. However, Bismarck himself emerges as a genuinely sinister presence given to prophetic man-of-destiny statements; looking at a map of Europe, for example, he declares: "I go to re-draw it in German script. I have a feeling I shall be busy for the next thirty years."

Lester's is a rather cynical film, and even the alleged freedom-fighters -- the independence movement of Stragenz -- fare poorly, since Karl Magnus seems hardly worth the effort. Perhaps Lester is hinting broadly at the inequality and conservatism of the movement in two characteristically absurd moments in the film: when the underground leader orders his underlings to make a human bridge for him to cross a moat and when one of these underlings is used as a human battering ram.[10] In any case, Flashman's involvement with the movements as unwilling as was his involvement with Bismark, and he ultimately flees Stragenz with the crown jewels -- only to be relieved of them by Lola Montez, a lady with whom he had had an affair earlier in the film.

If there is an opposite extreme to the cynicism and moral ambiguity of *Royal Flash*, it manifests itself in Robert Wise's *The Hindenberg*, in which events culminating in the alleged sabotage of the German airship in 1937 are dramatized around a simplistic Good-Germans-versus-Bad-Germans moral framework. Chief among the major characters in the film is Luftwaffe Colonel Franz Ritter, a "decent" man who is disillusioned with the Nazis on several counts: he disapproves of "Gestapo methods," he is sceptical of the Nazis' racial "theories," and he has come to regret his own participation in the bombing of Basque villages during the Spanish civil war. But most importantly, one gathers, Ritter is bitter and sad about the death of his son, a member of Hitler Youth who had been killed "fighting for the new order." In a wretchedly bad instance of so-called poetic justice, it is revealed that the son, after painting anti-Semitic slogans on the roof of a synagogue, had fallen and broken his neck!

Ritter has been placed in charge of security on the airship, prior to the fateful last voyage, because of predicted or threatened sabotage -- an eventuality rendered all the more likely because the ship is filled with hydrogen rather than helium, which the U.S. monopolizes. As it happens, there is indeed a saboteur on board, in the person of a crewman named Boerth. He is a member of the German resistance movement and sees the Hindenberg as a propaganda weapon symbolizing Nazi power. Boerth anticipates World War II with the observation that "Spain is practice for the Luftwaffe," and is convinced that once the Hindenberg is destroyed "decent Germans will get the courage to join us." It is not his intention to kill anyone -- presumably, an anti-Nazi who was prepared to sacrifice innocent lives would be too much of a moral ambiguity -- and at one point he risks his life repairing some of the ship's exterior covering. Ultimately, Boerth and Ritter confront one another and Ritter agrees to get everyone off the ship when it moors in Lakehurst, New Jersey, after which a time bomb will explode.

The bad Germans in the film are typified by Gestapo agent Martin Vogel, who is Ritter's cabin-mate and unabashedly Nazi. ("The world is mongrelized," he says to Ritter. "Only in Berlin is everyone pure." Ritter's reply: "A lot of people fail to see all our sterling qualities.") The bad Germans sing songs about purifying the fatherland and dominating the world. Vogel himself eventually arrests and tortures Boerth, and is in turn overwhelmed by Ritter. The airship has fallen behind schedule, and the bomb will explode before everyone has disembarked. Ritter persuades Boerth to tell him the bomb's whereabouts and makes a lastditch effort to de-fuse it before the explosion. As everyone knows, he fails. It is then asserted in an epilog that Hitler deemed the destruction an "act of God," because he could not bear to admit that the resistance was responsible. This is not quite convincing, given that the incineration of thirty-five people might be used to descredit the resistance. In any case, The Hindenberg is the kind of movie in which good and evil are clearly labeled. Though some attempt is made to dramatize the difficult choices a "decent German" would have to make, the deck is so stacked that when Ritter -- a loyal military man with a son in Hitler Youth -- wrestles with his conscience, it is no contest. We are shown symbols of Nazi Germany, and they trigger the familiar reflex response. No parallels with contemporary political situations seem intended, and the film leaves one with the comforting feeling that Nazism is of historical interest only.

It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time and Mahogany are romantic melodramas in which political candidates figure prominently. The former is a Canadian film about the antics of a character named Sweeney (excruciatingly over-played by Anthony Newley) and his efforts to win back his ex-wife, Georgina. Georgina is currently married to Ronald Prince, whose "bigger bank account" is his major asset. Prince is the wealthy owner of a construction company, while Sweeney is a struggling, irrepressibly cheerful painter. Throughout the film, Prince is involved with Sinclair Burton, a mayoralty candidate and chairman of the "Committee for the Preservation of Buildings of Historical Interest"; Sweeney's evaluation of this alliance is: "Corruption and bribery go hand in hand to the voters." Burton's committee is involved in the designation of certain houses as public monuments, and Prince, the building tycoon, is anxious that the committee make decisions that are favorable to him. Among these houses is one occupied by Georgina's mother, so Georgina -- unlike her husband -- is eager to see to it that "these lovely old homes are not indiscriminately destroyed."

Sweeney attempts to win his lady back largely through a series of infantile pranks that are apparently meant to be endearing. Typical of these is a laxative sabotage of a reception for candidate Burton. He also arranges a fake kidnapping of Georgina, which prompts Prince -- true to form -- to discuss with his lawyer the tax advantages of paying or not paying the ransom. Love conquers all, of course, and Georgina eventually comes to her senses: "I'm tired of loving the wrong people because they have money." After more chaotic "fun," Burton is arrested by some bumbling policemen and charged with indecent exposure. The film ends, then, with the wealthy and the powerful, the influence pedlars and the snobs, having been laid waste by Sweeney, complete with blue jeans, khaki jacket, running shoes, and a grin that perfectly complements his ever-present ugly yellow "smile" button.

In the American film Mahogany, Diana Ross stars as Tracy Chambers, a beautiful, pleasant, witty Chicago secretary who wants to be a fashion designer. Tracy is attending designer classes at night, but her major chance at success comes when photographer Sean McAvoy (Anthony Perkins) "discovers" her modeling potential. Meanwhile, she has become involved with handsome aldermanic candidate Brian Walker (Billy Dee Williams), and there develops between them a tension about whether it is more honorable to leave the ghetto for a better life, or fight to make ghetto life better. Walker prefers the latter alternative: "Someone's gotta stay and do the marching and the politicing and the fighting to make this a better place to live." He is campaigning to save neighborhood houses from speculators and apartment developers, against the vigorous opposition of construction workers. Walker wants neighborhoods in which people will be able to have "some kind of feeling for one another," and his speeches emphasize interdependence: "It's by pulling together [that] we feel our power and our strength."

Tracy is aggressively apolitical, though she does get importantly involved in Walker's campaign, for the avowed reason of injecting some "show biz" into it. But her overriding concerns are fame and fortune, and the pursuit of a meaningful independent career. (In Walker's opinion, Tracy's ambition is simply to "make clothes for rich people to look at in magazines.") McAvoy, the photographer, eventually persuades Tracy to leave Chicago -- where her skin color clearly impedes her career -- and try the more liberal climate of European modeling and designing circles. "In Europe," he says, "They don't send their pretty things out for coffee."

A "pretty thing" is exactly what Tracy becomes in Europe. McAvoy christens her "Mahogany" because "I give all my creations names of inanimate objects." Tracy rises to stunning heights as a high-priced mannequin, while her designing ambitions remain unrealized. Walker, meanwhile, has lost the aldermanic election, but he is "encouraged" by his showing, and will take a crack at the upcoming congressional race in his district. (No details of party affiliation or nomination processes are provided.) He visits Tracy in Rome, but is disgusted by the decadence of her life style, and by what success has done to her; he leaves her with a somber, emotionally delivered warning: "Let me tell you something and don't you ever forget it. Success is nothing without someone you love to share it with."

Eventually, Tracy gets her chance to design, but after a triumphant exhibition of her creations she decides to go home. Walker is campaigning for congress and speaking forcefully against corruption -- which his opponent, incredibly, defends as a natural part of politics! Walker also promises to stop the "power merchants from trodding all over the little people." Tracy merges with a small outdoor crowd listening to Walker speak, and, in a joking question-and-answer session with him, promises to stand by her man. ("I want you to get me my old man back," she shouts. "Are you prepared to stand by him when the going gets rough?" "Yes." And so on, ad nauseam.) Money, we learn for the millionth time, cannot buy happiness, as the heroine of this film abandons a lucrative career and cheerfully retreats to the role of eager helpmate for her ambitious husband. As might be expected, Tracy's decision is not motivated by a belated realization that she ought to help the folks back home after all, but by private sentiments about Walker and the emptiness of glamorous living.

Finally, we shall consider seven movies of national or international intrigue and adventure. Primarily, these are action melodramas; most of them are about the adventures of Americans abroad, and they all involve plot devices of comparatively explicit political interest -- terrorism, "political" kidnappings, assassinations, espionage, and so on.

Call Him Mr. Shatter, for example, opens in a fictitious East African country whose President, General M'Goya, is shot dead by an American mercenary named Shatter (Stuart Whitman). Shatter, we learn, frequently performs such "dirty jobs" -- albeit not without some distaste -- and on this occasion he was to be paid $100,000 by the "agency" in Washington. But when he goes to Hong Kong, where he is to collect the money, he finds that the "agency" did not hire him after all, and, in fact, disowns him completely. Further to this, Shatter is now persona non grata in Hong Kong itself -- a point which is impressed upon him when he is beaten mercilessly by the "security division" of the Hong Kong police. He spends the rest of the movie disillusioned and paranoid, dodging frequent attempts on his life; the efforts to kill him apparently have something to do with a mysterious package he took from M'Goya and which a crime syndicate is interested in acquiring. Shatter is befriended by a Chinese masseuse and falls in love with her, but she is killed during one of the attempts on his life. This gives him an opportunity to denounce the "filthy business" that started with the assassination.

In the muddled politics of the film, M'Goya is described as a "tyrant and lousy dictator," whom the CIA is pleased to see dead, though they would have preferred a "simple accident." The slain leader had been involved in the opium trade, we are told, to the point of being a puppet for the Hong Kong crime syndicate. He decided, however, that he could run the country by himself -- with the help of arms from the "Red" Chinese -- and halted the drug traffic. It is not at all clear whether the latter move was for humanitarian reasons. In any case, M'Goya's brother had arranged the assassination and succeeded to the presidency, and he now wants Shatter brought back to East Africa to be tried and publicly garroted. The main reason for this, one gathers, is the new president's unexplained but frequently mentioned desire to embarrass the Western powers -- especially the British -- by implicating them in M'Goya's death. At one point in the film we are shown pseudodocumentary footage of the execution of a rebel in the fictitious country, but this seems designed less to elicit sympathy for the rebel than to demonstrate the "life is cheap" atmosphere in which the violent political machinations take place.

Neil Bowman, the hero of Caravan to Vaccares, is also an American involved in intrigue abroad. This time the setting is south-west France, and Bowman is a rather different kind of mercenary than was Shatter.

Bowman is a drifter who is temporarily in the employ of the Duc de Croytor, a wealthy Frenchman, who wants him to escort a Hungarian named Stefan Zuger to New York. Though Bowman is kept very much in the dark as to the exact nature of his mission, after several attempts on his life and a verbal confrontation with the Hungarian, he discovers the truth. "I make invention," says Zuger. "I want to make method free to all. My country say no...." The invention is a device that will "convert the sun's rays to energy," and Zuger would give it to the United Nations to be made available to rich and poor alike. ("In twenty years," he cautions us, "all oil is gone.") As it turns out, it is not Zuger's government who is trying to stop him, but some free enterprise criminals who want to sell Zuger and his invention to the highest bidder. Like Shatter, the hero of this poorly done film spends most of his time coping with attempts on his own life, or Zuger's, and trying to figure out exactly what is going on. Unlike Call Him Mr. Shatter, there is an undercurrent of idealism -- or naivety -- in the film, as when de Croytor admonishes Bowman for being a quitter: "You quit the army, your job, your country. Sooner or later you'll find there are some situations you cannot quit." This prediction comes to pass when Bowman overcomes his reluctance to involve himself with the Zuger affair, and willingly accompanies the idealistic inventor to New York. We are not told the circumstances of Bowman's having "quit the army," etc., but one gets the impression it was not the right thing to do.

Like his counterparts in Call Him Mr. Shatter and Caravan to Vaccares, the hero of Journey Into Fear -- an unsuccessful, updated re-make of the famous Orson Welles film -- is an American who is caught up in a situation he only partly understands. Specifically, he is an engineer and geologist employed in Istanbul by the "Vainbridge Oil and Natural Resource Company," an American enterprise which numbers among its associates the head of the Turkish secret police. The intricacies of the plot are numerous, but the following is the major point that emerges from the various threads of the story: the hero, Mr. Graham, is an expert on oil exploration and he has information about Turkish oil reserves which makes him valuable to the Turkish government (the Turks are "good guys" in this movie), and a target for a mercenary killer who apparently works for the Arabs ("bad guys"). The latter point is unclear, since the killer -- during a final showdown with Graham -- is enigmatic about the people he works for: "Oil is money. Money is politics. I work for money." (Earlier in the film, the villain, while traveling under an assumed identity, had referred to himself as "a good Arab -- not a terrorist or anti-Semite.")

The killer's mission is to delay Graham's report on the Turkish reserves until unspecified new treaties have been signed and new prices agreed upon -- or, alternatively, to suppress the report altogether. Graham spends most of the film figuratively and literally at sea -- London and New York are his ultimate destinations -- not knowing who is on what side, and taking a foolishly long time to come to the realization that his life is in danger. The sea voyage enables the director, Daniel Mann, to give the film a modicum of visual style, symbolizing as it does the hero's bewilderment, and in this respect Journey Into Fear is a shade better than most of the melodramas. The metaphor is extended during the on-shore sequences by the use of equally conventional devices: shots of lengthy hallways, spiral staircases, confusing arrays of building columns, and other architectural mazes.

In The 'Human' Factor and Sky Riders, Americans abroad are victims of "left wing terrorism." Initially, The 'Human' Factor looks like a Death Wish imitation. George Kenedy plays an electronics expert working at a NATO installation in Naples. When his wife and three children are inexplicably murdered, Kennedy grieves for a while before becoming predictably enraged. Then, after a family of five are similarly slaughtered, he decides to catch the killers himself, with the help of "suspect profiles" available to him by way of a secret computer network.[11] The suspects -- all young people -- include a "former S.D.S. radical" with "ultra left" views, someone who had "contacts with known militants," a Palestinian who "took political science and Middle East studies at Berkeley," and so on. It transpires that these "psychos," as Kennedy calls them, are randomly killing one American family every three days pending the release of some nameless "political terrorists" and the payment of $10,000,000 in U.S. currency. Kennedy, a lump-in-the-throat- patriot in this movie, sees the whole thing as a straight-forward case of anti-Americanism: "They just want to humiliate us. That's pretty much an international sport lately." In due course, Kennedy slays the radicals one by one; he does not want them in jail where they can be "ransomed out by another group of psychos." The film closes with a lengthy biblical passage referring to an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and so on.

Sky Riders is, as Richard Combs says in the Monthly Film Bulletin, "an unmistakeable stablemate" of The 'Human' Factor, though the emphasis is more clearly on adventure than bloodletting. Jonas Bracken (Robert Culp) is a wealthy American living in Athens. His wife and two children are kidnapped by the "World Activist Revolutionary Army," which is "fighting the tyranny of world-wide imperialism." Though the Brackens' servants were slain during the abduction, the World Activists profess egalitarianism -- "The rich will share or the rich will die" -- and demand $5,000,000 ransom for the three hostages. They are being held in a "people's jail," a mountain monastery that functions as a fortress. The hero of the film is Mrs. Bracken's ex-husband (James Coburn), who organizes a team of dare-devil hang-gliders to storm the monastery and rescue the prisoners. The activists, it goes without saying, are stupidly conceived caricatures who, as the police explain, are "only interested in anarchy and chaos." They have "World Activist" neatly emblazoned on T-shirts, and have as their leader a young man with a permanent two-day growth, a crazed look in his eyes, an accent one takes to be German, and an unpleasant facial scar that was acquired, he says, when he was hit with a rifle butt during a "peaceful demonstration." This is, as Combs says, "a no-nonsense, leftist-squelching" movie and it is unblushingly on the side of Bracken and his money. The hard pressed magnate's most poignant scene may be his dejected announcement that in order to pay the huge ransom he will have to sell his copper holdings. He is spared this trauma when Coburn and his associates rescue the kidnap victims. The terrorists, of course, are killed.

Who?, unlike most of the intrigue and adventure movies is set largely in the continental United States. A certain Doctor Martino had been supervisor of the top secret "Neptune project" in Florida. After a nearly fatal car accident, he winds up in East Germany where he is "re-built" -- complete with metallic head -- and subsequently released to American officials at a Berlin checkpoint. It is up to FBI agent Sean Rogers (Elliott Gould) to determine if this strange looking creature really is Martino, how much he has told the East Germans ("They cracked him....They cracked everyone they ever wanted. Why not him?), and whether he is presently a security risk. It turns out that Martino is the real thing after all, and he is not a security risk -- though we learn in a tedious sub-plot that a close friend of Martino's, a college friend who had been involved in Democratic politics, has indeed become a traitor. (This is a rare instance of "real" party affiliations being attributed to fictional characters.) The chief point of the film seems to be that Rogers' harassment of Dr. Martino, in the interests of ascertaining the scientist's authenticity and patriotism, is no better than similar treatment accorded by Rogers' East German counterparts, who are interested in scientific intelligence. In the end, Martino carries the "plague on both your houses" idea to its logical conclusion, and -- notwithstanding his security clearance -- refuses to return to the Neptune project. Instead, he'll live on a farm at some unnamed "Canadian lakes" where, we are told, the FBI owns a couple of hundred acres of land. Despite Martino's difficulties, the film is quite sympathetic towards Rogers, whose insensitivity is excused on the grounds of "professional detachment." Rogers, let us remember, carries the weight of the "free world" on his shoulders -- as is evident in this classically outrageous line: "If I make a wrong decision, my friend, all our kids could wind up snorting vodka and eating borsch with chop sticks." (What that says about Sino-Soviet politics may be left to the reader to ascertain.)

Finally, we come to the curious case of Abduction, which is also set in the U.S. proper, but which -- like Sky Riders and The 'Human' Factor -- is about terrorism. Though the film was allegedly based on a book published a year before the Hearst kidnapping,[12] the parallels with that celebrated case seem too blatant to be coincidental. Patricia Prescott is the daughter of a real estate tycoon, and she is abducted from her apartment by a group of revolutionaries who, in the process, viciously beat up her boy friend. Patricia is held as a "political prisoner" by the group -- which includes Dory, the black leader, Frank, Carol and Angie -- and forced to videotape a message to her father: she will be killed unless he agrees to blow up the "Park Tower Apartment Complex." The latter edifice, it is revealed, had been intended as a low-income housing project, but Prescott -- through the machinations of a dummy corporation he controls -- has transformed it into a high-rent luxury complex. Since the original project involved grants from a government agency, Prescott had to overcome some legal obstacles by paying off judges, the police, and government officials. (That, at least, is how the radicals see it, and the viewer is not led to believe or suspect otherwise.)

For the kidnappers, then, Prescott is proof that the political system and political processes have been polluted by "the forces of social and financial repression that cause millions to live in poverty and despair." Prescott, for his part, is quick to realize the broader significance of the kidnapping: "These people are not criminals -- not in the usual sense....It's not our money they're after. It's us, our way of life, everything we represent." (This is a calm rather than panicky assessment.) After Prescott pressures the police to get results, they arrest Jake, an associate of the kidnappers, who is brutally persuaded to reveal their identities. In what is now a tiresome ritual in many movies, Jake's beating is prefaced by shouts of "Don't threaten me, I know my constitutional rights."

Meanwhile, Patricia is gradually being convinced of the validity of the group's cause, but not before being raped by Dory -- who sends Prescott a videotape of the event. During the course of her captivity, Patricia is also forced to "make it" with Carol -- this too is videtaped -- and she eventually initiates an uncoerced _ménage à trois_ with Frank and Dory. Without minimizing the obvious exploitation aspects of these scenes, it should be noted that the sexual content in _Abduction_ is itself of political interest -- symbolizing, on the one hand, Patricia's abrupt and terrifying separation from conventional moral codes, and on the other hand, the presumed personal "liberation" that results from a radical political transformation. (While that seems to be what the filmmakers had in mind, the sexual content would undoubtedly "prove" to some observers that the group was savage and immoral -- in the same way that conventional attitudes towards sex can be portrayed or interpreted as attractively "upright," or foolishly "uptight," by conservatives and liberals respectively.)

The more intellectualized aspect of Patricia's conversion is a little less heavy-handed than the transformation from rape to sexual liberation. Convinced by the radicals that her father is corrupt, and much taken with the group on a social and sexual level, she overcomes her initial limp reservations about them ("Your cause seems right, but is it the only way?" "How can you do all these terrible things when you say you believe in a better world?") in the face of equally uninspired assertions to the effect that violence is the only way, and one life is of no consequence when dealing with such large-scale social injustices. To be fair, the transition is a little more credible on film than it is on paper, and is helped along by Patricia's more initimate knowledge of her father's corporate holdings and political influence. Once convinced of his corruption, for example, she is more astute than the radicals in assessing the extent of his power and the limitations it imposes on normal, non-violent channels. By the end of the film, the apartment complex has been blown up as requested, but Patricia chooses to stay with the group. The movie concludes with a demonstration of the thoroughness of her new convictions: when Dory is recognized by two off-duty policemen who happen upon the house where she has been held, she shoots both of them.

Abduction is not exactly a profound political statement, but the political content is too detailed and too carefully played out to warrant the film's dismissal as a "sexploitation" melodrama. The capsule review in Variety, for example, is quite misleading: "Porno in spirit, if not in the flesh. Essentially nasty, slickly sensational, empty-headed." More sympathetically, Jill

Forbes, in the Monthly Film Bulletin, thought the film was "successful at showing Patricia growing in self-awareness and political understanding, despite the flimsiness of the theoretical basis." She faults the film because, among other reasons, "it falls back on a crude psychological ploy which suggests that Patricia Prescott was bored by all the good things privilege can buy and secretly yearned for the clutches of a black revolutionary rapist when in the arms of her sedate and studious boyfriend." One would add to this the comment that Abduction is unique among the melodramas we have discussed in that it presents revolutionary activity in a way that does not -- by implication or otherwise -- reduce the motives of the radicals to individual materialistic terms. When Prescott says they are not after money, he is right, and that point is never undermined. For all that, the film is nasty and -- if any didactic intentions may be presumed -- it is a failure. The plight of the urban poor, for example, is stated in sloganistic terms, and never personified dramatically in a way that might elicit sympathy or anger. We are not shown any poor people. Since Prescott et al. are corrupt, we are left to identify with the radicals; and these impress us, right or left, as fundamentally unpleasant people.

With that, we conclude our discussion of those films designated "melodramas with politically interesting sub-plots or implications." In subsequent chapters, a smaller block of films -- message and analytical movies -- will be examined. For now, we propose to summarize and draw some tentative conclusions from the material presented here.

Concluding observations

We have now allocated some sixty-five movies into three categories and we have discussed many of them -- in greater or lesser detail -- to illustrate the kinds of films which constituted this portion of our sample, and to explain what the categories were about and how they differed from one another. With the possible exception of borderline cases such as The Story of Adèle H. and The Romantic Englishwoman, the films discussed in this chapter are quite unlikely to find their way into conventional treatments of political cinema, though one or two might be mentioned as mild curiosities (Abduction) or outright jokes (Who?). Moreover, as we have suggested from time to time, many of the films are of an aesthetic quality that ranges from mediocre (Mahogany) to awful (Pursuit, and too many others). What we have tried to document in this chapter is that, good or bad, these films include a great deal of political and politically relevant content; the politics is not always, or often, very sensible, and it is half-hearted at best, but it is there all the same. Having discussed individual films and clusters of films, and having pointed out some of their apparent political content, we conclude now with some general remarks about each of the three categories, and about this entire block of films.

As a group, films of minimal political interest are far removed from explicit references to politics in the narrow, governmental sense; and what limited political content we infer is itself several times removed from any allusion to political institutions or processes. As far as politics is concerned, these are movies which traffic primarily in _hints_ and _labels_. Carole Lombard hints of systematic factors at work when she complains of the way the "damn thing is so set up" in _Gable and Lombard_; and the Peter Fonda character assumes an anarchist label -- albeit with tongue in cheek -- in _Killer Force_; but neither the hints nor the labels are ever sustained or developed to a point where they become interesting or controversial -- nothing emerges that would educate or offend non-believers, dissuade or re-inforce believers. Characters assume stances which, in the films, do not carry convincing implications; the Fonda character is an unextraordinary bandit, and Lombard in an eccentric, feisty actress, and nothing that either of them does seems to flow from any conscious deliberation about social processes. (The major function of the labels, it seems, is to invite identification without causing discomfort to less "progressive" segments of the audience -- hence, a romantic, glamorous feminist, and an anarchist diamond thief.)

Similarly, we have seen that some labels -- the Nazi speculators in Watch Out We're Mad -- invite equally superficial negative reactions; disturbing ideologies are reduced to cartoon caricatures, in a way that is suggestive of Furhammar and Isaksson's assessment of wartime propaganda films:

> ... to the extent that propagandist drama has succeeded in conditioning the audience to react in a Pavlovian was to the enemy as well as its own side, it has also disconnected the response from any basis of reasoning or ideology. Unfortunately, this has happened with reactions to Nazism and Fascism, which were originally ideologies that had to be fought but were gradually reduced to symbols of evil with almost exclusively metaphysical significance. Anti-Nazism lost its real meaning and became no more than a signal; beneath it, diametrically opposed ideas have managed to get insinuated into both propaganda films and apparently innocuous entertainments.[13]

The symbolic use of anti-Nazism is apparent not only in Watch Out We're Mad, but in The Hindenberg -- a film that is more seriously and pretentiously anti-Nazi.

The sub-culture movies, as a group, leave one with the very definite feeling that some social strata are better off than others, and that life can be trying, painful, or downright brutal for those who are not fully integrated into the mainstream of a society. But although movies like *Aaron Loves Angela* and *Cooley High* broadly suggest a fundamental unfairness about a group's status in society, generally they fall short of explicitly or implicitly attributing any *blame* to recognizable political institutions, individuals, or processes. The corollary of this is that the problems which are raised are solved, if at all, in the most individualistic fashion. Thus, the limitations of Aaron's social status are asserted rather than explained, so there is no realistic sense of a solution; he must simply be honest, stay out of trouble, and do what his father and girl friend think is best. Preach, in *Cooley High*, must work hard and get a scholarship -- always easier to come by in the movies than in real life -- lest he become a football player or a factory worker. Rufus, the slum landlord in *Hazel's People*, undergoes a magical change of heart. Other solutions are rather less docile: *Sheba Baby* and *Dolemite* -- both of them badly written and directed -- at least communicate an impression of violent, angry assertiveness that is a lively alternative to the "be a good boy"/"don't be angry"/"education is the key" and assorted other bromides of *Aaron et al*. Also, films such as *Sheba Baby* and *Dolemite* are more likely to attribute blame for certain problems -- usually having to do with crime and drugs -- to corrupt "honky" politicians and policemen.

Another characteristic of many sub-culture movies is the sense of geographical and social immobility which they communicate. The characters generally stay within fairly definite geographical boundaries -- a street, for example, or a section of a city -- and interact primarily or only with members of the same social stratum; this usually eliminates either the opportunity for, or the necessity of, accounting for the group's status in terms of others who are more or less fortunate. We note, however, an interesting difference between, on the one hand, *Aaron Loves Angela* and *Cooley High*; and on the other hand, *Lies My Father Told Me* and *Hester Street*. The first two are about young American blacks and the setting is more or less contemporary (early sixties to the present); one way or another, the major characters want to get *out* of the physical and social environment in which they live. The other two films are about Jewish immigrants and the settings are more historical (turn of the century to 1920's); both films are clearly *nostalgic* about the physical and social environments in which they are set. Without suggesting that the situations dramatized in both sets of films are in any sense exact parallels, it does seem likely that life for Jewish immigrants in Montreal and New York was considerably less blissful than the movies would indicate. The nostalgic approach necessitates -- or is itself caused by -- an idealized view of adverse conditions such that poverty becomes a matter of rustic decor and costuming, rather than ceaseless hardships, inadequate diets, shortened life spans, suicidal anxieties, or broken marriages.

Among the melodramas, we have identified two subcategories which are imbedded with traces of liberalism and conservatism ranging from vague to explicit. The movies of crime and detection tend to be "liberal" in the sense that our sympathies are largely directed towards the "little shots" rather than the "big shots"; the former may be detectives of a kind, as in Family Plot, but are often heroically depicted or sympathetically portrayed outlaws, who are either excused as victims of adverse circumstances (Lucky Lady), or explained as an understandable, bizarre manifestation of "the American Dream" (The Four Deuces). It is not that there is any thoughtful notion of social justice in these movies, but rather that many of them are about people who *feel* they do not have enough -- this is something we are told rather than shown -- and who are now about to win or steal a "piece of the action." (Cf. The Zebra Force, The Four Deuces, Las Vegas Lady, Lucky Lady; the notion of "little" people making it to the top is also an aspect of Hearts of the West and Goodbye, Norma Jean.)

What is being sought in many of these movies is, of course, nothing remotely resembling egalitarianism: it is personal success, usually in the form of wealth and social status. Indeed, one is sometimes left with the feeling that actually working for a living -- at an ordinary, routine job -- is quite beneath the dignity of anyone with imagination, ambition, and "class."

Most of the movies of intrigue, on the other hand, may be described as relatively "conservative" because they direct our sympathies towards people who, in their various ways, are associated with established economic and political power (an FBI agent, the representative of an oil company, a CIA operative, an electronics expert in NATO, a wealthy industrialist); and their lives, loved ones, peace of mind, or possessions stand threatened by leftist bugaboos which, as movie advertisements used to claim, are "ripped from today's headlines" (terrorists, student radicals, greedy Arabs, communists, and anti-imperialist Africans). The headline analogy is an apt one because in an important way these movies are similar to scanning headlines in a newspaper: one gets a rough, superficial sense of events -- a kidnapping here, an assassination there, oil prices will rise, imperialism is denounced -- without any sense of substance. Events which, in the real world, would be politically substantial and complex become, in these movies, a routine occasion for heroic achievement by the main character, and are typically presented solely in relation to their effect on his survival. Nonetheless, the films do carry factual implications of a political nature, and one wonders how much of that information is ever perceived and responded to. Call Him Mr. Shatter, for example, tells the audience that the CIA pays some of its employees to kill foreign heads of state. From the point of view of a sophisticated observer, that may be a shameless attempt to capitalize on sensational revelations about CIA activities in foreign countries; but for others, it may be perceived as credible, eye-opening news. More generally, we "learn" from several movies of intrigue that terrorists are primarily interested in financial gain, that Americans abroad are disliked and senselessly maligned, and that the machinations of international politics beget chaos, bewilderment, and violence.

In one respect, the political inadequacies of melodramas contrast sharply with the inadequacies of subculture movies: while the latter can create at least a vague impression of deprivation or hard times without explicitly locating causes in political structures or processess, many of the melodramas tend to emphasize explicit political terminology and slogans without conveying a sustained or convincing image of the social reality to which the slogans might refer. Principally, we are exposed to a lexicon of melodramatic political terminology: "power merchants," "little people," "corruption and bribery," "Gestapo methods," "Nazi racial theories," "tyrant and lousy dictator," "ultra left psychos," "the forces of social and financial repression," "oppressed urban poor," and so on. One of the problems, of couse, is that some of the persons and processes alluded to are never actually depicted, but even when they are the depiction is often insubstantial and unreal. In Lucky Lady, for example, when Liza Minnelli talks about being poor we do not *really* think of her as being poor; rather, we absorb the data because we know it is intended to justify and explain her bootlegging career. We recognize it, in other words, as a cinematically commonplace attribution of motivation -- which in itself is of some political interest -- and not as an allusion to actual conditions of deprivation. Many of the other terms and slogans encountered have precisely this aspect of unreality about them. (Nonetheless, that kind of political content, such as it is, is more prevalent in the melodramas than in films of minimal political interest, and it tends to be more effectively dramatized and less peripheral to the central themes and stories.)

Finally, there is about many of the films we have discussed an undercurrent of cynicism about *individual* corruption as distinct from any focused criticism of *insti-*

tutions. In "tough" movies like Sheba Baby and Dolemite, as we have seen, an unarticulated assumption seems to be that existing institutions would be just, or at least adequate, were they not defiled by unworthy people. One would suppose, for example, that loan companies would be a reasonably "safe" target for those who would presume to address themselves to ghetto blacks; yet Sheba Baby carefully differentiates between legitimate loan companies and illegitimate loan companies (or loan sharks), and it is the latter who are the targets. (Indeed, since Sheba's slain father owned a loan company, one finds oneself getting downright sentimental about them.) Even Abduction, which has theoretical pretensions, portrays Prescott -- the Hearst surrogate -- as a man knee-deep in payoffs to judges, policemen and politicians. And, or course, the leftists in movies like The 'Human' Factor are not the leftists of legal "creeping socialism" or other alleged sources of conservative anxiety; they are crazed, gunslinging, murderous outlaws who must be stopped by extraordinary means because normal procedures are either ineffective, or are undermined by "soft" individuals (e.g., plodding policemen and liberal judges). The effect of all this, obviously, is that anything resembing social criticism -- right or left -- becomes blunted by being cast into a cops and robbers mold. A crucial value which emerges, then, and which cuts across the rough liberal-conservative distinctions we have made, is this: the laws are just and ought to be obeyed; illegality is justifiable, or at least understandable, principally as a response to illegal activity by others -- especially those more powerful, more effective, and more affluent than oneself. In this scheme of things, illegality and injustice are synonymous terms.

To sum up, the sixty-five films we have categorized and talked about in this chapter contain political and politically relevant content of a kind that is normally ignored by students of political cinema. That lack of interest is understandable, given the weaknesses we have alluded to: very generally, the films are characterized less by thoughtful analysis, reasoned argument, and focused criticism, than by well-meaning platitudes, strident slogans, and shapeless cynicism. It is at least a plausible hypothesis, however, that if movies have any impact at all, shapeless cynicism is as potent a force as focused criticism; and, for better or for worse, platitudes and slogans are often the very currency of politics.

The fact that many of the films discussed so far involve unflattering references to politicians and political processes is a matter that will be considered in more detail in our concluding chapter. Indeed, we shall also see that a certain political cynicism is not entirely peculiar to the

the films already discussed -- or, for that matter, to the whole sample. We shall see, too, that the tendency for films to encourage empathy for individuals who are somehow disadvantaged -- a tendency evident in many of the sub-culture films about crime and detection -- is developed more fully in our two most important categories: message and analytical films. Those we will discuss in considerable detail in the next two chapters.

ENDNOTES

1. We shall have occasion, also, to indicate different clusters of films within categories.

   The classification of films by country or origin will be important, of course, when inferences are made concerning relationships between politics in films and politics in actual societies. For the moment, the reader is reminded that the vast majority of films we have designated "commercial" are American in origin. When we talk about films of other countries, normal practice will be to mention the specific country when it is not otherwise implied.

2. The term "melodrama" is being used in roughly the same sense as that given in W.F. Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature, revised and enlarged by C. Hugh Holman, (New York: Odyssey Press, 1960), p. 280: "A play based on a romantic plot and developed sensationally, with little regard for convincing motivation and with a constant appeal to the emotions of the audience. The object is to keep the audience thrilled by the awakening, no matter how, of strong feelings of pity or horror or joy. Poetic justice is superficially secured, the characters (who are either very good or very bad) being rewarded or punished according to their deeds." ("Plot," "motivation," and "poetic justice," are in small capital letters in the original, to indicate separate entries.)

   In the present context, however, the term is not intended to be an absolute designation. A film or scenario can be more or less melodramatic, or have some melodramatic aspects, and so on. Some of the sub-culture movies, for example, are highly melodramatic -- but their political interest derives less from these melodramatic aspects than from attempts to re-create the details of a physical and social environment. On the other hand, films we have called "melodramas with politically interesting sub-plots or implications" typically derive their political interest precisely from sensational -- melodramatic -- twists of plot: an assassination, a kidnapping, a romantic involvement with an aspiring politician, and so on.

3. Films are listed by category in Appendix 'C'.

4. For virtually every film in the sample, of course, at

least one plot summary and/or review is available. The plot summaries which are given in the text are largely based on our own notes, though we have liberally made use of the available -- and invaluable -- review material cited in Appendix 'A'. When material from a review article is quoted directly, the general practice will be to name the periodical and/or author. That information, coupled with the information in Appendix 'A', will eliminate the need for redundant footnotes, while providing the interested reader with all the information needed to verify a quote, read it in context, peruse an alternative plot summary, or whatever.

In some respects, however, our summaries and comments will tend to differ substantially from the review material cited:

(i) Throughout our analysis, we will frequently quote characters in films; unless otherwise noted, such quotes are from our own notes and not from published material. (We have been able to check the accuracy of some quotes, in second or third viewings of several of the more interesting films in the sample, and are confident that a high degree of exactness has been attained. Punctuation, of course, has had to be "invented," and, when appropriate, we have tried to indicate words which have been especially emphasized.)

Film, of course, is at least as much a visual medium as a verbal one, but dissertations are not; so, in an essay such as this it is sometimes convenient to indicate the "mood" or "flavor" of a movie with a simple quote. Thus, "All they can do is put a name on things they can't understand" nicely captures the attitude towards psychiatrists that is conveyed -- in diverse visual and verbal ways -- in The Anti-Christ et al. There will be times, too, when the quoted material is all there is, or when the more important point is being made visually -- e.g., by crosscutting -- rather than with dialogue; in cases such as the latter one we shall specify what the cutting seems to mean.

(ii) Our plot summaries and discussions will emphasize political and politically relevant content, while deemphasizing politically "irrelevant" content -- except insofar as its inclusion is necessary to make summaries, or subsequent comments, intelligible. Inevitably, this will make some movies seem more political than they really are. A movie like Sky Riders, for example, is more about hang-gliding than politics, but one would not necessarily get that impression from reading our discussion of it -- albeit the category it is in is an important clue. Also, we make no pretense about exhausting even the political aspects of many of the films discussed.

In other words, our summaries and discussions are based on, but are in no sense a substitute for, viewings of the films in question; to regard them as such, especially given our preference for political content, would be seriously misleading.

5. For the most part, we shall talk about films using the names of characters rather than the names of stars. Occasionally we shall indicate who plays what part, if the information seems useful or interesting; thus, when talking about the "working class hero" aspect of Peeper, it is helpful to know that Michael Caine is the lead player. Directors and writers, too, will be named when it seems interesting or useful to do so. This data will be available for each film in Appendix 'A'.

6. Ms. Grier's screen persona is itself of some passing interest. An attractive-looking, bad actress, she plays black "super" women ("I'm not going to sit on the sidelines just because I'm a woman") -- beautiful but tough, merciless with the bad guys, and independent of her male companions, who are only marginally or timidly involved with the action. Male villains are frequently taunted about their sexual prowess or lack thereof. In Sheba Baby, for example, she is held captive on a yacht owned by the white insurance man cum loan shark ("I knew no one legitimate could own a boat like this"); at one point she teases him sexually and, when he starts to respond, kicks him in the groin: "Have I bruised your masculinity? What's that done to your masculinity?" And so on.

7. Losey offers this interpretation in an interview with Richard Combs published in Sight and Sound, Vol. 44(3), pp. 139-141. It is also quoted in Kael, The New Yorker, Dec. 8, 1975.

8. Two films which do not comfortably fit the sub-culture category are Next Stop, Greenwich Village and 92 in the Shade, though both may be regarded as boarderline cases. The latter film, directed by Thomas McGuane from a screenplay based on his own novel, is about a "queer breed of odds and ends" -- as a character in the film puts it -- living around Key West, Florida. Nichol

Dance, played by Warren Oates, is a hard-drinking, violence-prone fishing guide who has threatened to kill potential competitor Tom Skelton (Peter Fonda), a young drifter who wants to be a guide because "It's the only thing I can do half right." While this conflict is a thread that runs throughout the film and is happily resolved at the end, McGuane's larger concern seems to be a study of characters and their environment -- both physical and social.

Next Stop, Greenwich Village is a Paul Mazursky film about an aspiring actor who leaves his Brooklyn home (circa 1953) to take up residence in the "beat" colony of Greenwich Village. Besides communicating the emotional, artistic, and economic concerns of his subjects, Mazursky is careful to outline the political atmosphere in which they function, with frequent references to: the execution of the Rosenbergs; blacklisted television writers; and the belief of just about everyone in the film that, after Truman, Eisenhower was a distinct disappointment.

Both films are marginal instances of the sub-culture category, because the groups in question are more heterogeneous and less clearly defined than is the case with most movies in this category. 92 in the Shade, for example, cuts across groups in its emphasis on Tom's relationships with his ne'er-do-well father and well-off, influential grandfather. The protagonists in Next Stop, Greenwich Village also constitute something of a cross-section, and are, at any rate, mobile in terms of both geography and sociology.

9. In the matter of "tracker" movies, it is interesting to consider Philip French's remarks about The Wild Bunch and its imitators. These, he tells us, "focus upon a disparate bank of utterly corrupt hunters accompanied (or led) by some fairly decent character who is increasingly sickened by his companions and the task at hand. These pursuers have the support, more or less, of society and the law; their quarries are outlaws but generally sympathetic ones, possessed of greater character and moral strength than their trackers. The immediate political and allegorical background to these ferociously brutal stories is almost certainly the conditions of the Vietnam war and the moral confusion that conflict has engendered." Philip French, Westerns (London: Secker and Warburg in association with the B.F.I., 1973), p. 42. The Legend of Earl Durand is a rather different kind of tracker movie -- another recent,

awful example is Challenge to be Free -- for a couple of reasons: an individual is being pursued and he has gotten into trouble accidentally and/or because he harbours some primitive, undefined, socially unacceptable notion of "freedom"; also, he is admired by the trackers, but never to the point where anyone doubts that he must be hunted down and (usually) killed. Everyone -- trackers and quarry -- seems willingly involved in the creation of a legend or myth.

10. The casual use or mis-treatment of underlings is a recurring motif in Lester's recent historical melodramas -- especially Royal Flash, The Three Musketeers, and its sequel. (Robin and Marian will be discussed in a later chapter.) Servants, peasants, beggars, foot-soldiers -- all go about their affairs paying as little attention as possible to the chaotic "great" events unfolding around them. One of the energetic swashbuckling scenes in The Three Musketeers, for example, takes place while washerwomen casually try to continue their drudgery as best they can, with sporadic distractions as one or more of the combatants -- gentlemen/buffoons -- is dumped into the laundry vats. From time to time, an underling is literally used, often humorously, and unceremoniously discarded. The overall impression of these films, we suggest, is one of history being a contest of elite buffoons over trivial matters ("The Queen's Necklace"), while the drudgery beneath them continues unabated no matter what the outcome.

11. The spectre of a secret network of computers with readily available "suspect profiles" is not presented in The 'Human' Factor as anything one ought to get alarmed about, but it would be an interesting footnote for a paper about the powers of movie computers -- for good and evil. From the soft-spoken, petulant HAL (one letter removed from IBM) in 2001: A Space Odyssey, to the prototypical mad scientist in rock bottom science fiction movies ("I've just programmed the computer to blow up the world"), the potential and existing powers of celluloid computers seem limitless.

12. The Variety review of Oct. 15, 1975 (by "Sege.") says that although Abduction "parallels the Patty Hearst kidnapping almost precisely, it is based on a book ("Black Abductor" by Harrison James) published at least a year before the actual event." It is not clear from the review whether or not the book itself involved such precise parallels.

Variety also reports that the film "was originally lensed as a hardcore porno venture," before being subsequently re-edited "for broader playoff." Judging from that review, it is almost certain that the film was re-edited further before being distributed in Canada. Similarly, the version reviewed in the British Monthly Film Bulletin was undoubtedly a cut print, and and would have been considerably "tamer" than the so-called hardcore version. This would help explain why the film seemed more "porno" than politics to the jaded Variety reviewer. (It is sometimes the case that movies which, by reputation, are completely concerned with sex, also contain a great deal more. I am Curious -- Yellow is an excellent case in point. Prints shown in some parts of Canada had none of the controversial sex-related sequences and -- to the astonishment of audiences -- what was left was politics!)

13. Leif Furhammer and Folke Isaksson, Politics and Film, tran. Kersti French, (London: Studio Vista, 1971), p. 247.

CHAPTER THREE

POLITICAL CONTENT IN MESSAGE MOVIES

> "If you want to send a message, call Western Union."
>
> -- Old Hollywood adage.

Introduction

The distinction we wish to make between "message" and "analytical" movies -- the two blocks of films which will be examined next -- stems from misgivings and objections raised by others about the very idea of "reducing" film content to the level of unambiguous message. In a review article in Film Quarterly several years ago, Robert Chappetta, for one, argued persuasively against construing certain films as "texts to be read only one way, as if their meaning could be flattened out into some sort of univocal statement."[1] He went on to assert that, with respect to the meaning of a political film, "there is a tendency to freeze our perception of it in terms of what we think the 'message' is, and to block off further discovery of meaning." Chappetta cautioned that such a tendency could be severely misleading, at least with respect to a film like Bertolucci's The Spider's Strategem, because " its metaphoric style is too oblique and ambiguous to provide a newspaper headline message." Elsewhere, and in an entirely different context, V.F. Perkins has made a complementary point:

> Too great a concentration on what a film 'has to say' implies that the significance of a movie is reducible to the verbal concepts which its action suggests. But films are unlikely to replace speech or writing as the medium for examining and conveying ideas. Moral, political, philosophical and other concepts can attain in words an (at least apparent) clarity and precision which no other medium can rival. The movie's claim to significance lies in its embodiment of tensions, complexities and ambiguities. It has a built-in tendency to favor the communication of vision and experience as against programme.[2]

Though one would not necessarily endorse all the far-reaching implications of the remarks by Perkins, his caveat and Chappetta's are sensible and entirely appropriate to our present pursuits. It is clearly the case, however, that although certain films cannot reasonably be construed as simple, univocal messages, other films can be reduced to such tidy statements, and tortuous mental gymnastics would be required to construe them any other way. Films which appear to be of this caliber have been designated "issue" or "message" movies in the present study. (As always, this is a relative matter, and we acknowledge that there may be one or more minor themes lurking in the background of some otherwise "singleminded" message movie.) Other political films may not be reducible to simple messages -- though messages may be stated or implied -- because either (a) the message is too complex and ambiguous to be encompassed by a simple statement; or (b) the political interest may lie as much in the "communication of vision and experience" as in the articulation of a message or set of ideological propositions. These we have called analytical movies -- movies which include complex social and political analysis.

What we wish to make clear, in continuing the explication of our classification scheme and the analysis of the sample, is the vastly different political interest which accrues to the two types -- between, for example, a quintessential message movie like Lipstick, which dramatizes the plight of a rape victim in the U.S. judicial system and unambiguously tells us what to think about it, and a quintessential analytical movie like Nashville, which has embedded and explicit messages, but which is more significant for the "vision and experience" it communicates and the metaphorical implications which permeate it. This does not mean, of course, that only message movies can be sensibly talked about in terms of what they "say" or what meaning can be gleaned from them; or that movies like Nashville are mysteriously beyond analysis and so rich in nuance that, as screenwriter Joan Tewkesbury has claimed, "whatever you think about the film is right, even if you think the film is wrong."[3] But it does mean that, as Perkins and Chappetta have indicated, some movies contain such a wealth of connotations that no interpretation is correct and complete in any absolute sense, and none should be seized upon to "block off further discovery of meaning." This open-endedness must be tempered by the realization that not all discoveries of meaning are equally valid: generally, an interpretation is most persuasive to the extent that it plausibly accounts for (or explains) the phenomena in a particular film which require (or invite) explanation; an interpretation of Nashville, for example, that ignored the "replacement" motif would be incomplete relative to one which incorporated it -- assuming both analyses were otherwise equally encompassing.

In this chapter, our concern will be with rather less complex matters, as we focus our attention on the ten films that have been designated "issue" or "message" movies.

We shall conclude the chapter with some general remarks about message movies, before continuing with a discussion of analytical movies in Chapter Four.

The movies and the messages

Analogous to the categories discussed in the previous chapter, some message movies have impressed us as being highly typical of the category to which they have been allocated, while others are secondary instances -- either because the message is a less significant aspect of the film, or because the point of view is less obvious than is typical for films in this class. As with any classification scheme in which judgment is predominant, some of the entities being classified "fit" the various slots better than do other entities. With respect to their political interest, Ken Russell's Lisztomania, and a filmed stage musical called The Rocky Horror Picture Show, are certainly "bad fits," or borderline instances of the message movie category -- but their inclusion here is less perverse than might seem to be the case at first glance. We shall examine those two films first, before proceeding with a discussion of the more characteristic films in the category.

Concerning Ken Russell, a director of considerable stature in some circles, one must abandon any pretense to sympathetic appreciation, and confess to an inability to treat his films as seriously -- or to interpret them as generously -- as would some of his admirers.[4] Nonetheless, Russell clearly has "something to say" in Lisztomania and the film is more similar, politically, to the message category than to any other.

True to form, Lisztomania is a willfully gaudy, eccentric burlesque of what used to be known as composer "biopics." Franz Liszt is played by rock music star Roger Daltrey, and is conceived as the nineteenth century equivalent of contemporary popular music superstars; his compositions and performances -- rock arrangements of Liszt and some songs written for the film -- are the delight of screaming teenage admirers and he is flamboyantly and unabashedly in "show business." Variously described as a "trip" and a "sense experience," the comical excesses of the movie could be exemplified a hundredfold, though two will suffice: the Pope is played by Ringo Starr, who wears cowboy boots and spurs and is costumed in a robe decorated with icons of movie stars; that, however is comparatively subtle statement about pop idolatry next to Russell's treatment of Liszt's sexual psyche -- as when Liszt, a libertine, disappears into a giant mock-up of a vagina, eventually emerging with a giant phallus (elsewhere estimated at ten to twelve feet) on which five of his mistresses can dance. As Stephen Farber says, in Film Comment: "Russell's work is notable for its intensity, ferocity, and imaginative boldness rather than for its subtle nuance, its psychological depth, or its intellectual acuteness."

For our purposes, the film is of political interest because of Russell's demonstrable concern with the artist's responsibility for social evils, and, more specifically, because of his entirely unoriginal allegation that the seeds of Nazism were sown by Liszt's contemporary -- and son-in-law -- Richard Wagner. Wagner, another youthful star in Lisztomania, is a political pamphleteer and visionary who is convinced he will "write music that will free the imagination of the German people and create men of iron ...." "The hour of the Aryan superman is at hand," he tells his followers, who wear modified Superman costumes with W's adorning their chests. Nazi symbolism abounds, of course, and Wagner's dream of unifying Germany includes the annihilation of Jews ("Drive the beast from our glorious fatherland!"). Meanwhile, he has stolen Liszt's music and misused it in his own dreadful fashion -- which is to say, some of Liszt's devoted admirers eventually reappear in the guise of Wagner's Nazi storm troopers. (Liszt says of the theft of his music: "I didn't mind him taking it. It's what he did with it.") Towards the end of the film, we see Liszt in heaven watching a monstrous, vampiristic Wagner -- who has died and been reborn as Hitler -- murdering Jews with a machine gun shaped like an electric guitar. Liszt and his mistresses descend in a spaceship that is a facsimile of a grand organ, and he kills Wagner-Hitler with a raygun. An excruciating song heralds the departure of the celestial entourage and the end of the movie: "love has won . . . . Our love has ended war. He'll torture man no more . . . . We'll live in peace at last." And so on.

The message in all of this has been sympathetically set out by Stephen Farber, though even he was critical of Russell's "theory of a neat causal relationship between Wagner and Hitler, a theory that ignores all the other complex factors that contributed to the rise of Nazism ...." Farber seemed more impressed with Russell's treatment of the artist's responsibility to society and to himself:

> His concern about the abuses of art gives the film its passion. Russell wants us to see the connections between Liszt and Wagner -- not just the family connection or the musical influence of one on the other, but the influence of Liszt's flamboyant commercialism on Wagner's megalomania. The cult of the superstar leads to sinister cult of the superman . . . . Russell's point is not simply that hysterical teenagers are incipient fascists. What he is really saying in Lisztomania is once the artist surrenders to the rule of the marketplace, he has violated the natural order of the universe and released demons that cannot be controlled.
>
> The Nazi scenes . . . express Russell's worst fears of what can happen when art is perverted by show business and political fanaticism.

What "the natural order of the universe" is with respect to artists and the marketplace, we cannot say. Otherwise, Farber's reading of the film's message seems sound, though our interpretation is less generous. Principally, Russell's message is a comic-book restatement of two commonplace propositions: (1) Nazism did not emerge overnight, but was rooted in certain elements of German culture; Russell made the same point in an earlier film, Mahler, and he recently reminded us that "Hitler always said, to understand National Socialist Germany, you must read Wagner's philosophy and listen to his music."[5] (2) There is and apparent correspondence between idolized entertainers and charismatic political leaders, and between hysterical concert fans and fanatical political followers. While neither proposition is worthless (though they are not truisms either), Russell dramatizes and relates them in a manner that is visually ostentatious, but intellectually simplistic and unimaginative -- g.g., Wagner becomes Hitler. The film is further embellished with inane "peace is love" philosophizing and some fuzzy, undeveloped notions about the power of music for good and evil. The Take One reviewer summed it up succinctly: " . . . the director stacks symbol upon symbol, noise upon noise and gimmick upon gimmick, and comes up with an empty gesture. It is not that Lisztomania is too much, really, but that it is too little, and vacuous."

More so than Lisztomania, The Rocky Horror Picture Show is an exceedingly tenuous example of the message category, and can be dealt with summarily. Originally a London stage musical written by Richard O'Brien, the film is a broad, colorful parody of old science fiction and horror films. Two clean-cut young people, Brad and Janet, stumble upon a castle that is inhabited by extraterrestial visitors from the planet Transylvania, who, it turns out, are holding their annual convention! The leader of the aliens is one "Frank N. Furter," who describes himself as a "Sweet Transvestite from Transylvania" and dresses accordingly. In many ways, the film is the kind of "sense experience" one associates with Ken Russell, though it is better written, funnier, and more energetic than Lisztomania -- thanks especially to strenuous performances by "Frank N. Furter" and some of his outlandish cohorts. Also like Lisztomania, this movie flirts with messages, but does so in a more limited and indirect way. Certainly there is an anti-establishment undercurrent, such that government, science, and conventional morality are associated with fascism, sterility, and repression. This idea rears its head most explicitly, perhaps, with the appearance of Dr. von Scott -- Brad's former science teacher, now working for the government -- who vainly pleads with the couple to leave the castle before "this decadence saps our wills." In The Rocky Horror Picture Show, of course, decadence is superior to "square";the latter concept is presumably exemplified by Richard Nixon, whose resignation speech is heard on Brad's car radio at the beginning of the film.

More allegorical than Lisztomania or The Rocky Horror Picture Show, but proclaiming related ideas, is the Italian film Down the Ancient Stairs,[6] directed by Mario Bolognini. The setting of the film is an insane asylum in Tuscany, Italy, in the year 1930; and, though the allegory is hazy and not really developed, some statement about fascism is plainly intended. The head doctor at the asylum, Dr. Bonnaccorsi (played by Marcello Mastroianni), is ostensibly a dedicated, humane professional who is obsessively committed to researching the notion that insanity is caused by a virus and some day may be chemically cured. The hospital is a closed environment, not only for patients, but for administrators and staff as well. No one wants any involvement with the outside world, and no one expects to be touched by its turmoil: "This is just another administration," says Bonnaccorsi. "No one cares what happens here." The doctor himself has been inside the institution for eight years and regards it as "my little kingdom." Though he apparently enjoys a substantial reputation among his professional colleagues, Bonnaccorsi clearly prefers the love and devotion of the hospital staff and patients; among his more devoted admirers are three women with whom he is having simultaneous affairs -- a nurse, and the wives of a fellow doctor and administrator.

Bonnaccorsi's kingdom is irrevocably changed with the arrival of Dr. Anna Bersani, who, after spurning his sexual overtures, confronts him with the falsity of his viral theory and exposes the selfish motives which underly his manifest altruism. It transpires that Bonnaccorsi's father had committed suicide, his sister is a patient in the asylum, and he is morbidly apprehensive that he too may become mad. Following the confrontation with Bersani, Bonnaccorsi spends a night in one of the ward beds, and leaves the next morning. At a train station he is exposed to the ravings of a Fascist Party propagandist: "The world belongs to the strong. Our first step is to eliminate the depraved, the artists, and the whores...."

Down the Ancient Stairs is the kind of film that can be confidently described as "sort of a metaphor of the times" (Variety), but less confidently discussed with respect to what the metaphor means. Certainly the film broadly affirms that the madness inside the asylum is more benign than the madness outside it. That message is clear, but more seems to be implied. In particular, we seem intended, at several points, to contemplate the possibility that Bonnaccorsi's kingdom spawns a personality cult and an unhealthy devotion, dependence, and obedience which are all too congruent with fascist values. The film is problematic, however, because of the uncertainty it communicates about the central character: he seems too genuinely humanitarian to be credible as a surrogate Mussolini, if that is the intention, and even his foolish obsession cannot credibly be interpreted as purely selfish: "He only wanted the insane to have the dignity the physically ill have," says a nurse, and she is right. Mastroianni, for his part, plays the character so sympathetically that Dr. Bersani's "exposé" makes him seem all the more vulnerable rather than sinister or fraudulent. This uncertain perspective, we would suggest, is not symptomatic of realistic complexity of character or genuine ambiguity, but of their counterfeits -- an undisciplined conceptualization and gratuitous equivocation. With less patience, Jonathan Rosenbaum (Monthly Film Bulletin) has dismissed the film as a "lugubrious salad of apparent 'good intentions'" and has suggested that "whatever allegory about Mussolini's Italy the film-makers might have had in mind remains so undeveloped that one could easily imagine Ken Russell filling in all the spaces."

With the British production Conduct Unbecoming, an exasperating filmed play written by Barry England and directed by Michael Anderson, we shift our emphasis towards films that are more typical of the message category. The principal statement -- that private honor ought to prevail over the honor of the regiment -- is unmistakable, and in the dramatization of it, nothing is left to chance or uncertain interpretation. The film is set in India in 1878, and the drama begins with the arrival of two young officers, Drake and Millington (Michael York and James Faulkener) to assume their duties with the Twentieth Indian Light Cavalry. Drake is dedicated and conscientious, while Millington is cynical, disrespectful, and determined to be thrown out of the regiment before his three-month probation period is up. Unpopular with his fellow officers, Millington is eventually accused of having brutally assaulted Mrs. Marjorie Scarlett (Susannah York), who is the promiscuous, attractive widow of a regimental hero, and a woman with whom Millington had had a brief, unsuccessful flirtation. In an ugly parody of the regimental sport of "pig-sticking," Mrs. Scarlett apparently was forced to crawl on her hands and knees while being jabbed with a sword.

For the sake of "regimental honor," the scandal is hushed up and Millington is tried by a kangaroo court whose proceedings "do not officially exist" and from which there is no appeal. The court, convening at midnight, is presided over by an adjutant (Stacey Keach), a rigid authoritarian who wants to "go through the motions" as quickly as possible. But Millington has perversely selected Drake as his defender -- Millington does not care about the outcome, but he wants Drake to share his own disillusionment --

and Drake feels that, for the honor of the regiment, he must conduct the best defense possible. The courtroom drama which follows constitutes the greater part of the film/play, and, as is all too conventional, we endure the usual array of surprising witnesses giving surprising testimony only to be surprisingly recalled before the predictable acquittal. The truth, most of which is revealed outside the court, is this: Captain John Scarlett, the victim's late husband, had been killed in an ambush during an 1875 revolt. His mutilated body, with "the sex ripped out," had been found by Second-in-Command Major Roach (Richard Attenborough), who was mentally unbalanced by the incident; Roach's condition was further agitated by Mrs. Scarlett's subsequent promiscuity. Major Roach, we are told, is somehow "possessed" by the spirit of John Scarlett and regards unfaithful wives as pigs; hence his attack on Mrs. Scarlett, and his earlier assault on another unfaithful regimental wife. In the interests of comradeship and honor, Roach was protected by Major Wimbourne (Christopher Plummer), the lover of the earlier victim. Wimbourne now resolves to settle the matter in the "traditional" manner and, with Drake watching in the shadows, he successfully persuades Roach to kill himself. By the end of the film Drake has decided to leave the regiment; this is the most plausible of several radical transformations, the most preposterous being the exonerated Millington's transition from cynical nonconformist to respected officer.

There is a moment in Conduct Unbecoming which captures the essence of the prototypical message movie: Drake steadfastly summons up the courage to tell his commander (and us) "I cannot put the honor of the regiment above my own." And the reply is: "Your honor and the regiment's must be one." There, lest we make any mistake about it, the message and its contradiction have been spelled out clearly; the entire film is only a slight, if verbose, elaboration on this exchange, with occasional arbitrary forays into related territory -- as when Mrs. Scarlett, during the inevitable breakdown under cross-examination, excuses herself for refusing to name the real assailant by denouncing the entire regiment's attitude towards women: "It doesn't matter who it was. All of them are stupid, cruel men who treat women and pigs alike." What makes the film/play especially exasperating, however, -- apart from lofty dialogue such as, "You will not again speak to me of honor" -- is its failure to deal sensibly with the opposing point of view, and this may be a generic weakness of message films. Instead of gaining any appreciation of what regimental honor might mean, and why anyone would want private morality to take a back seat to it, we get an impressive aggregation of "prestige" actors tilting their chins upward and affirming their devotion to the concept -- as if the writer were convinced that repeating the terminology often enough would somehow convey its meaning and importance. The propagators of regimental honor are so transparently wrongheaded that the crucial question by the end of the first reel is not "who did it?", but why Michael York is taking such an interminably long time to find out what the writer and director have made so obvious -- viz., that this is an environment in which discipline, conformity, and the facade of honor have completely overwhelmed individualistic notions of truth and justice; honor has come to mean reputation rather than a commitment to genuine good conduct.

Conduct Unbecoming was not well received in critical circles; it was castigated in The New Yorker and the Monthly Film Bulletin, and only lukewarmly praised in Variety and Films and Filming. The theme was variously described as "obsolete," "out-moded," and "somewhat old-fashioned" -- although it is quite plausible that the film's perpetrators intended it as a relevant post-Watergate fable. Derek Elley, in Films and Filming, confirmed our own interpretation of the message:

> Essentially the story turns on the difficulties of maintaining personal honor within the demands of a tradition-bound and highly disciplined environment ....The theme is a familiar one, particularly in British cinema, and England's play has little in the way of extra comment.

The film, incidentally, is notably uninteresting to look at; it is stage-bound in the worst sense of the word, except for a few foolishly-conceived concessions to the film medium -- e.g., it opens with an exhilarating cavalry charge that is hopelessly out of tune with the rest of the clausterphobic, studio courtroom drams.

The American film Lipstick and the Canadian film Recommendation for Mercy bear a superficial resemblance to Conduct Unbecoming: each of the films has as a central plot ingredient a lurid, sensational crime against a woman, and the subsequent trial of the alleged perpetrator. But Conduct Unbecoming was only incidentally and rather timidly about a system of justice; once initial objections to the improvised court have been set aside, the film may as well have been set in a genuine court martial with rough justice prevailing in the end -- the innocent man is acquitted and the real culprit commits suicide. In contrast to this, systems of justice are critically examined in Lipstick and Recommendation for Mercy -- in the former, from the perspective of a rape victim; and in the latter, from the perspective of an accused rapist/murder.

In Lipstick, directed by Lamont Johnson, Margaux Hemingway is appropriately cast as celebrated fashion model Chris McCormick. As the film opens, Chris is filming a series of slick, sexy lipstick commercials on location in

California, where she is visited by her sister Kathy (played by Ms. Hemmingway's real-life sister, Mariel) and by Kathy's music teacher, Gordon Stuart (Chris Sarandon). Ostensibly, Stuart is trying to interest Chris in some of his peculiar, avant-garde music -- electronic compositions which include among other things, amplified sounds of human heart beats. But some unsubtle cutting -- from Stuart to Chris's briefly exposed breast -- alerts us to the possibility that she may be "selling" herself too successfully. Later, in her apartment, she and Stuart listen to some of the music, but she is bored and bewildered by it. Stuart is apparently angered by this, and seems further undone by the poshness of the surroundings and, not least of all, by another provocative glimpse of Chris in the nude. In the exceptionally brutal scene which follows, he tears her clothes off, smears her lips with the advertised lipstick, binds her spreadeagled to the bed, and rapes her; in the process, her head is beaten against the bedpost. Kathy comes home just before Stuart leaves, but does not seem to realize what has happened.

Following a humiliating police investigation -- they want to "take pictures of her injuries" -- Chris persuades veteran attorney Carla Bondi (Anne Bancroft) to prosecute the case. Bondi agrees to this on the condition that Chris will testify, and she warns Chris that the going will be tough, and that, statistically, their chances of success are slim: it is estimated that there are 50,000 cases of rape in California each year; of these only 10,000 are reported; and of those brought to trial, only two percent are convicted. (According to *Boxoffice*, director Johnson, writer David Rayfiel, and producer Freddie Fields "went to great lengths to insure accuracy by conferring with the Rape Squads of Los Angeles' and New York City's Police departments") During the trial itself, the rape victim is appalled to find herself less victim than defendant. Both Chris and her sister are questioned about the former's sexual preferences, and Chris is forced to admit, among other things, that she was occasionally resorted to "impure thoughts" to get "turned on" for a photograph. What the defence lawyer successfully implies, of course, is that Chris, a professional sex object, is a woman of questionable character who, at a minimum, invited the rape with her deliberate seductiveness, and, at a maximum, was actively perverted. "It was impossible to tell," says Stuart's attorney, "just who the victim was." The jury agrees ~~and~~ Stuart, who had phoned Chris and taunted her even while the trial was in progress, is acquitted.

After the trial, Chris halfheartedly resumes her modelling career and Stuart continues to teach music to school girls. Kathy is no longer his pupil, but after a chance meeting with him a week after the trial, she too is raped. In the dubious tradition of Death Wish et al., an enraged Chris spontaneously kills Stuart with a rifle. She is tried, defended by Carla Bondi, and found "Not Guilty." The point of the exercise is underlined by Bondi during her ringing summation to the jury and to us: "The failure of justice may be more damaging to society than crime itself."

As the preceding summary may indicate, there is a lot that is wrong with Lipstick. Statistically, Ms. Hemingway's character seems an extremely unlikely rape victime, just as Stuart is an unlikely perpetrator; that incongruity has been pointed out by Richard Schickel (Time) and Richard Corliss (New Times) among others. But even if we accept the characters as being legitimately atypical -- in which case the statistics should not have been used to imply some kind of representativeness -- the plot developments remain arbitrarily sensational. The circumstances of the first rape constitute a particularly glossy contrivance; it is not, as Schickel puts it, "a brutish lunge out of the dark. The rape is strictly high fashion -- a handsome bedroom setting, the victim tied prettily with silk scarves while he sodomizes her, the whole business staged and photographed with stylish prurience." In fact, the entire episode is filmed in such a way that it is easier to imagine it as a souvenir of Stuart's than as a sympathetic record by an outraged observer.

Nonetheless, the principal message of the film -- that investigative and trial procedures are more degrading for rape victims than for perpetrators, to the point that vigilantism may be justified -- is slammed home with minimal subtlety and complexity. The defendant is an incorrigible, willful tormentor, his lawyer is a heartless inquisitor, and the jury members are pathetically gullible. It is inconceivable, in the context of this film that a civilized person might be outraged at the brutal cross-examination of a rape victim and still care about the trial (or pre-trial) rights of accused rapists. Even more mischievious is the film's insinuation that the rapist's professional and musical interests somehow identify him as a pervert. Indeed, it is only a slight exaggeration to claim as a subsidiary message of the film, "you shall know rapists by their music"; Carla Bondi, for one, tries to make an issue of the "weirdness" of Stuart's music during the course of her prosecution.

Having said this, we must acknowledge again that what seems like a transparent trivialization of an important issue may be perceived by some as an important and constructive statement. Despite its critical drubbing -- Variety, for example, called it a "cynical violence exploitationer" -- Lipstick's pretensions were not unrewarded. According to a two-page advertisement in Variety (Dec. 8, 1976), Ms.

Hemingway was given the "Citizenship Through Entertainment" award by the San Fernando Valley Criminal Bar Association "for her courage, dedication, and unselfish public spirit in bringing a tragic wrong to international awareness...." Also, according to the advertisement, a resolution of the California Senate Rules Committee, adopted November 18, 1976, commended Ms. Hemingway and called Lipstick "the first film to present the feminist viewpoint on the subject of rape; ... 'Lipstick' has heightened the awareness of millions of people across the country of the plight of the victims of rape...." Paramount Pictures and Dino De Laurentiis, who underwrote the film, are mentioned prominently in the resolution.

Recommendation for Mercy, unlike Lipstick, is on the side of the accused person -- with the absolutely crucial qualification that he has been wrongly accused. Directed by Murray Markowitz, the film opens with the usual disclaimer that "any resemblance to actual persons living or dead is purely coincidental," after acknowledging nonetheless that "the basic idea for the film was inspired by an actual event." Minutes later, most Canadians will realize that the "actual event" was the Steven Truscott case of 1959; and that, clearly, is what the film is about. In the fictional version, the Truscott character is a 14-year-old boy named John Robinson who is arrested and tried for the rape and murder of a 13-year-old girl. A web of circumstantial evidence implicates the boy, and the trial judge virtually instructs the jury to return a "guilty" verdict, which they do. Notwithstanding the jury's recommendation for mercy, Robinson is sentenced to hang. The sentence is eventually commuted to life imprisonment, and the film concludes with Robinson, years later, pleading for parole, emphasizing his rehabilitation, and regretting his "dreadful mistake."

Markowitz's message is anti-capital punishment on at least two counts. First, he invites us to contemplate with the boy the horror of death by hanging; a scene in which young Robinson imagines his own execution is realistically repulsive apart from considerations of guilt or innocence, though it is naive to suggest, as Lee Rolfe has done in Cinema Canada, that the scene "should convince most that judicial executions are morally wrong." A second and more important point stems from the structure of the film. Markowitz tries to reconstruct the facts and incidents which have implicated Robinson so as to provide plausible, innocent explanations for them -- so that we understand why the evidence appears damning, while realizing it is all a horrible coincidence. This is not a novel technique, and it strains credibility at the best of times, which may be why Markowitz bolsters his argument with facile cutaways to a number of different people who, we are led to believe, conceivably could have committed the crime. Also, he has taken a leaf from Lord of the Flies in suggesting that petty jealousies and childhood petulance may have played a part in the way Robinson's peers contributed to his downfall. The message of the film, then, is not simply that capital punishment is wrong, but that it is wrong because an innocent person can be convicted and (almost) executed. In this respect, Robinson's penitent appeal for parole must be interpreted (contrary to the Cinema Canada review which scored Markowitz's ambivalence about the boy's guilt) as the final indignity suffered by him; the tone of the appeal, especially given everything that has gone before it, is one of ingratiation laced with bitter irony, not confession and repentence.

Recommendation for Mercy varies between being a "true detective" examination of a brutal crime, complete with sleazy police photographs of the dead girl's body, and being a sensitive portrait of a terrified young man caught in a bewildering, impersonal legal system. Guilty or innocent, Robinson is overwhelmed by it all: the police seem more interested in a confession than the truth; his lawyer is inept; and the judge seals his fate by dictating the verdict. Status considerations are involved too, as when Robinson, in an outburst that is too "academic" for the character, attributes his misfortune to his father's powerlessness and poor financial situation relative to that of the dead girl's father. Robinson's father is eventually fired because of the scandal, and though he believes his son is innocent, he sporadically berates the boy for his sheer "bad luck" in being accused of the girl's murder.

Finally, one would point out that although capital punishment has been abolished in Canada, the question was not at all moot when Recommendation for Mercy was released. The Parliament of Canada was considering the abolition legislation after the expiry of a five-year capital punishment moratorium that specifically excluded convicted killers of on-duty policemen and prison guards; the outcome was uncertain and several condemned killers were awaiting execution. (This is not to suggest, however, that the film itself was either provocative or influential.)

If fallible individuals misuse imperfect systems of justice in Lipstick and Recommendation for Mercy, there is no suggestion of anything conspiratorial in either. Both films point to problems that are publicly visible and potentially soluble: the dramatized failures of justice are inflicted in open court; and neither film excludes the possibility of public redress of the problems raised -- in fact, quite the opposite is implied. A very different situation arises in The Secret, a French-Italian co-production directed by Robert Enrico, in which the state itself looms as an ominous, surreptitious executioner.

David Daguerre (played by Jean-Louis Tritignant) is an inmate in what appears to be an insane asylum. In the opening sequence of the film, Daguerre fakes suicide in his cell, kills a guard, and escapes to Păris; the sequence is intercut with shots of Daguerre being tortured, and these have a nightmare quality about them which suggest they may be either a grotesque reality or the delusions of a madman. The latter ambiguity is sustained for most of the film. After a brief interlude in Paris with his former lover, Daguerre goes out to the country in search of a hiding place. A chance meeting with a writer, Thomas Berthelot, and Berthelot's lover, Julia Vandal, leads to a tentative friendship and sanctuary. Julia is apprehensive about the stranger, but Thomas is fascinated by him (_cf._ _The Romantic Englishwoman_), in spite of indications that their lives may be in danger: Daguerre has explained that he is marked for death because he witnessed something he was not supposed to; his pursuers will assume that Thomas and Julia now know the secret, so they will be killed too. In fact, however, Daguerre never tells Thomas and Julia his secret and never gets very specific about who is trying to kill him. Instead, we are tantalized with bits and pieces of information which imply only that a vital matter of national security is involved, and that Daguerre is to be silenced not because he wants to tell his secret, but because "they" will not trust him not to tell it. "They," we are told, "can stifle anybody and anything."

Meanwhile, radio bulletins report the escape of a paranoid psychopath, and we wonder with Julia if Daguerre is a lunatic or if his story is true. Various plot inventions reinforce the uncertainty -- as when the house is surrounded by troops who seem likely to kill the trio, though it turns out that the troops are on manoeuvers; or when a man Julia thinks is a peasant is killed by Daguerre because he is alleged to have been a secret agent. Throughout this, we get sporadic verbal outbursts ("Don't you believe me? Don't you believe me?") from the nervous but otherwise composed Daguerre, and flashbacks to the torture scene in which a man in a lab coat discusses Daguerre's fate: "It's best if he were found after an accident. The victims of accidents always remain anonymous...." Thomas tends to believe Daguere's story, and agrees to take him to Spain, but Julia secretly asks her brother Claude, a journalist, to make enquiries about their companion. Government officials readily confirm that Daguerre is a dangerous madman, and Julia, after getting this information from her brother, conspires to extricate herself and Thomas from the situation. Ultimately, she confronts Daguerre with a pistol and kills him. "The nightmare is over," she says to Thomas. "Yes, it's all over," he replies -- but slowly and with an air of finality. It becomes clear now that they genuinely are in danger. They have been under surveillance by several men -- secret police, one presumes -- who now come forward and kill both of them. The gun used for the killings is placed in Daguerre's hand, and news reports later "explain" that an escaped lunatic committed suicide after killing a vacationing couple. A narrator underlines the point of the film and alludes to the inevitable fate of another of the protagonists: "to protect itself, society sets machines in motion .... Julia's brother knew nothing but he knew too much, and so the trap ensnared him too." And the camera takes us down the corridor where we had first encountered Daguerre, and into a room where Claude is being kept in a strait-jacket -- presumably until "they" find out how much he knows, what he has told others, and so on, completing the circle.

Though The Secret effectively creates some sense of paranoia about a faceless government conspiracy with far-reaching and invisible tentacles, the experience is, upon reflection, regrettably insubstantial. It can hardly be said, first of all, that the film affords any novel insights into either the paranoic state of mind or the mind of a legitimately terrified man. Though the acting is more than competent, the sense of paranoia is accomplished principally with twists of plot that toy with the viewer's expectations in a conventional -- and sometimes suspenseful -- way; these range from menacing footsteps which prove to be those of an innocent passerby, to more elaborate contrivances such as the troop movements already alluded to. This is all grist for the mill in well made thrillers, of course, but it does not transform a well made thriller into anything more consequential.

A more important limitation of the film is the way Enrico dabbles with the idea of a malevolent state conspiracy without ever addressing the problem in a very direct fashion. He alludes to the moral issues that are at stake, for example, but denies us the information we need to consider them. At one point, Daguerre asks rather enignatically: "Say you were able to save a whole country if you killed one guy. How would you feel?" Is he speaking of himself? Would his death "save a whole country?" In what way? What has he seen? What is at stake? For that matter, is he speaking of the murder of the guard at the beginning of the film? We are unable to tell. Enrico never lets us in on the secret, so we cannot make all the judgements the film invites. All we know is that several people have been tortured and/or killed for what some government officials (presumably) feel is the greater good of society; these killings have been accomplished without public knowledge or consideration. In the absence of clarifying information, this seems less a disturbing revelation than an obvious attempt to exploit mid-seventies cynicism about what governments are capable of. The most that can be claimed for the film is a message: that the "machines" a society sets in motion in the interests of its own security may grow to frighteningly uncontrollable proportions, and may assume a moral character that is a perversion of the recognized values of that society.

Elsewhere, The Secret was only moderately well received. Gordon Gow, in Films and Filming, was most enthusiastic -- as reviewers in that periodical frequently are -- and seemed especially impressed with the flashback sequences and with Trintignant's performance. Jonathan Rosenbaum, in the Monthly Film Bulletin, thought the film was a "familiar if watchable exercise in suspenseful guessing-games," but he was unimpressed with the politics: "... the sinister denouement winds up seeming somewhat perfunctory because the 'conspiracy' remains so abstract and undefined -- more an expedient narrative mechanism than a 'social warning' in the manner of The Parallax View, despite its portentous expression." It is significant, of course, that Enrico chose that particular narrative mechanism and not some other, but Rosenbaum's point is well taken. A great deal of the film could remain intact if Daguerre were being pursued not by state agents, but by the Mafia, a private army, foreign agents, or men from Mars.

In a rather different vein, the singularly humorless American comedy Whiffs, directed by Ted Post, is a blunt, ineffective attack on one of the more conspicuous "machines" a society sets in motion -- the military. The film is prefaced with a dedication to enlisted men who are experimental subjects in the "U.S. Chemical Corps" and with a boastful assertion that it was made without the cooperation of the U.S. Army. (This, we shall see, is to the army's everlasting credit.) The principal character is Dudley Frapper (Elliott Gould again), a human guinea pig for the U.S. Army's chemical and germ warfare tests. Dudley is dedicated to his work and feels he is making a "contribution to the peace of the world." He in turn is regarded as the "cream of the Chemical Corps" by his commanding officer, Colonel Lockyer (Eddie Albert), an ebullient warmonger who proudly describes chemicals and germs as "the only form of humane warfare." Unfortunately for Dudley, his years of service have been debilitating, and his current ailments include breathing problems, severe nervous tics, and sexual impotence. As a result of these, he is diagnosed as "unstable" and given a medical discharge on a hopelessly inadequate pension.

Several attempts at legitimate civilian employment prove disastrous for Dudley, typically ending with spastic attacks that horrify or embarrass his employers. His efforts to overcome impotence are similarly unsuccessful. Despondent and discouraged, he happens upon John, an ex-convict and friend from the Chemical Corps. John persuades Dudley that he will never make an honest living, because of his physical handicaps, and urges him to avenge the army's shabby treatment: "The army is screwing you. Everyone is screwing you. How about screwing them back?" Dudley agrees to get some temporarily incapacitating, non-lethal gas from the base, and he and John use the gas in a series of non-violent robberies. Civilian authorities are baffled and enlist the aid of Col. Lockyer, who realizes what has happened and mobilizes his men to capture the pair.

Meanwhile, Dudley has acquired a renewed sense of ambition and a "reason for living." He and John are determined to loot an entire town, and to that end they obtain the services of a crop duster named Dusty (sic). As Dusty, Godfrey Cambridge gives the film its solitary, thin vein of real humor -- insanely enthusiastic about his work, he is relentlessly, comically enraged at "organic food freaks" because of their disastrous effect on the crop dusting business, and he readily agrees to spray the designated town with gas in the mistaken belief that he is fumigating it. Though the innocent townspeople are shown writhing and gasping before losing consciousness, no one is "seriously" hurt -- automobile drivers, for example, are shown conveniently draped over steering wheels, and not decapitated in head-on collisions. After the looting, Dudley, John and Dusty find themselves surrounded by Col. Lockyer's men. Lockyer is thrilled that an "honest-to-goodness gas attack" has actually occurred and he retaliates in kind. But the propellor blades on Dusty's plane are used to blow the gas back towards the army. All three board the plane, but just before takeoff Dudley realizes he is no longer impotent; he gets off the plane to find his girl friend, breaks the news to her, and they pledge to meet again in Mexico.

There is little to be said about Whiffs that is not obvious from the sparsest of plot summaries. Even Boxoffice, which tends to be indiscriminately enthusiastic, was lukewarm: "The first half-hour is a clever satire, but then it begins to wear thin, as do most one-joke stories." The first half-hour is emphatically not a clever satire, but the message of the film is indeed evident very early in the game: the testing and deployment of chemicals for military purposes is immoral, and those responsible for such tests are foolishly zealous warmongers who are no match, spiritually or tactically, for the "loose," non-regimented hero of the film. That perspective is neither inherently fascinating nor novel, but it is entirely conceivable that it could be conveyed in a novel, fascinating way. Whiffs, however, is a pale, hopeless imitation of M*A*S*H ("The Most Hilarious Military Farce Since M*A*S*H !", claimed the advertisements) with a grossly inferior screenplay and mediocre direction. The film was ignored by serious film periodicals, and the brief review in Variety concentrated on its distastefulness;

> "Whiffs"... tries to draw laughs from the effects of Army chemical warfare tests on human subjects, but the only laughs are likely to come from embarrassment. A decade or so back, comedy about spastics and bumbling idiots had appeal to a certain audience,... but today such efforts are greeted with appalled silence.

The film's commercial prospects were described as "bleak."

Finally, in the message category, we shall consider two films with historical settings -- one about a fictional eighteenth century British castaway, and the other about a "lengendary" gunfighter in nineteenth century California. Both films contain shrill, unenlightening messages about white colonialism and racism.

Man Friday (Britain's official entry in the 1975 Cannes Film Festival) is an "adaptation" of Defoe's Robinson Crusoe, written by Adrian Mitchell, directed by Jack Gold, and staring Peter O'Toole as Crusoe and Richard Roundtree as Friday. As the story begins, the shipwrecked Crusoe is alone, reciting biblical passages that affirm man's dominion over the earth. When several cannibalistic tribesmen from another island are washed ashore after a storm, Crusoe starts killing them without provocation, sparing only one of them whom he wrongly believes to be a prisoner of the others. He names the survivor 'Friday' and attempts to teach him English, Christianity, and competitive sport. The latter two hallmarks of civilization are laughable and/or incomprehensible to Friday, but he does learn English, and settles into a master-slave relationship with Crusoe that is, for a time, satisfactory to both. But the black man soon grows restless under the yoke of slavery, and he is only momentarily appeased by the argument that Crusoe works with his brain just as Friday works with his brawn. Friday eventually asserts himself: "I am not working until all the work is shared. I will not live a slave." "The difference between a free man and a slave," explains Crusoe, "is that a free man is paid wages." So Friday is introduced to the mixed blessings of a wage system, and quickly perceives its absurdities -- especially when he is employed by Crusoe to recover a chest full of coins and then paid a single coin for his efforts.

Throughout the film, Crusoe shows himself to be not only unproductive, but close-minded and sexually repressed as well. Friday, particularly after an encounter with a landing party of slave-traders, grows even less enamored with, and more apprehensive about, Western civilization. He resolves to turn the tables on Crusoe, saves enough money to buy the master out, and forces him to work. A raft is built and they go to Friday's island, where his fellow tribesmen are told of his adventures. It transpires, too, that Crusoe wants to stay on Friday's island and join the tribe -- presumably his only alternative to living alone again. But the former slave will have none of this, and he persuades his people that Crusoe's influence will be too corrupting. Crusoe returns to his island, and, in the final sequence of the film, he is alone again, reciting biblical passages.

Man Friday attempts nothing less than the complete rehabilitation of the noble savage myth. Crusoe is the practitioner of virtually every evil ever attributed to Western man -- he is a mindless patriot, an imperialist, a slave owner, a capitalist, a religious dogmatist, a decadent class-conscious snob, and a violent, aggressive competitor all rolled into one. Friday, on the other hand, is innocence incarnate: he believes in sharing and brotherhood, and does not understand competition; he has to be taught the distinction between "mine" and "yours"; he believes God is everywhere, and regards the specific, personal God of Christian doctrine with bemused tolerance; he is incorruptible; and, not least of all in this film, he enjoys singing and dancing -- unlike the guilt-ridden, joyless Crusoe. The point of view of the film, of course, is that Western man -- far from being a civilizing influence -- brought his own savagely corrupt, perverse values to undermine what were really morally superior civilizations. A typical effort at contrasting the two cultures occurs at a tribal council. Some of the younger men suggest running against one another for a prize -- an idea the corrupt Crusoe had instilled in their impressionable minds; but the chief wisely reminds them of their traditional ways: "Why not run _with_ each other as we have always done?" And we are left to reflect upon the evils of competitive running and the despoliation of primitive, childlike innocence.

Not everyone was unimpressed with the simple-minded politics of _Man Friday_. The _Variety_ reviewer called the film "stimulating and thought-provoking," and described it as a "forceful and sometimes bitter treatise filled with irony on a number of ever-topical themes such as civilization, colonialism, race, class struggle, and so on. South East Asian parallels are evident, as well." More typically, _Newsweek_'s Katrine Ames called the film a "condescending sermon" in which Crusoe unambiguously represented Vice while Friday just as unambiguously represented Virtue. Jay Cocks, in _Time_ magazine, was outraged by the film's "intellectual masochism":

> We are meant to believe that Friday's tribe of cannibals represents some grander order of cultural purity free, one supposes, from the debauching influences of conscience and thought. These cannibals, however, would be at home in a minstrel show: they chuckle over the white man's antics, flash long rows of gleaming teeth and pass a great deal of time either sitting around the campfire or singing about the funny ways of the palm tree. For the mentality behind Man Friday, this may indeed represent a higher form of culture.

However profound or simple minded they thought the film was, no one seemed to have missed what Jill Forbes (Monthly Film Bulletin) called Man Friday's "resounding liberal intentions which trail sadly through every sequence...."

The Master Gunfighter, written by Harold Lapland, is universally assumed to have been directed by Tom Laughlin, though Laughlin's nine-year-old son actually gets the screen credit. The film is allegedly based on the 1966 Japanese film Goyokin (see Films & Filming, Monthly Film Bulletin, and Variety), though a narrated prologue implies some factual basis as well: "All history is part fact, part fiction.... This is the story of how it was in early California, and how it might have been." The prologue explains that in Northern California in the 1830's -- the setting of the film -- Indians were brutalized by the landowning Spanish, who were themselves victimized by the corrupt, expansionist American government. The Spanish missions, we are told, were "slave institutions," and once an Indian was baptized, he was compelled to stay and was flogged for subsequent transgressions. Meanwhile, the last of the Spanish nobility had its back to the wall, and was forced to pay exhorbitant taxes to the American government or suffer confiscation of land.

Having outlined the film's social and political setting, Laughlin *et al.* proceed with their story. Don Santiago, a once-wealthy Spanish land-owner, finds himself hard-pressed to pay new taxes which have been imposed by the American government. The new levy was inspired by the American cattlemen's association, which is said to "control senators and judges"; the principal local manifestation of the association is the neighboring Circle'K' ranch. To pay the taxes and save his large ranch, Santiago has his men arrange the destruction of a ship laden with $2,000,000 in government gold bullion; a large costal bonfire is used -- in the manner of a lighthouse -- to lure the ship onto rocks, and the gold is then salvaged by small fishing boats. Incredibly, the operation was to be kept secret by the "silencing" of all innocent witnesses -- namely, the entire population of the Indian fishing village, Galeta. Santiago's loyal son-in-law, Finley McLeod (Tom Laughlin), is a reluctant participant in the massacre, and his disgust soons prompts him to leave the ranch and his wife, Eula. Finley, the "legendary" master gunfighter of the title, employs with equal dexterity a twelve-shot pistol and a Japanese samurai sword. He has numerous opportunities to employ both, since his departure arouses the suspicions of the Americans (who feel he is implicated in the theft of the gold) as well as the Spanish (who feel he may tell the Americans what really happened).

Finley's exile lasts a couple of years, during which time he makes a living exhibiting his swordfighting and gunfighting abilities at carnival sideshows. But when Santiago's ranch foreman, Maltese, sends several men to kill Finley, he learns from one of them that another ship is to be wrecked, with similar tragic consequences for another Indian village. The architect of the new massacre will be Don Santiago's proud, headstrong son, Paulo (Ron O'Neal), who had given the orders at Galeta. Finley heads home to stop Paulo, expiate his own guilt, and recover his "true worth as a man." En route, he dispatches a seemingly endless stream of would-be assassins -- some from the Circle 'K' ranch, some inspired by Maltese -- and rescues an Indian girl, Chorika, who is revealed to be the only survivor of the Galeta massacre. He also befriends, after some initial doubts, Jacques St. Charles, a black secret agent of the federal government ("It's a dirty job, but it beats the hell out of pickin' cotton").

The homecoming odyssey ends when Finley and Jacques are captured by Paulo, whom we see lecturing his compatriots about the necessity of killing the Indians in order to preserve the Spaniards' way of life; while Paulo is speaking, the camera slowly pans across the faces of the Indian children just before they are herded into the church where they are to be killed. Paulo denounces Finley's idealism ("The world is not made as you idealists dream. There is butchery everywhere....") and pleads with him to go away again. But Finley promises to kill Paulo if the Indians are massacred, which inspires Paulo to order him weighted and dropped into the sea. For reasons known only to the scenarist, this cannot be done immediately, and the delay is ultimately fatal for Paulo. Thanks to his wife (who is also Paulo's sister), Finley escapes, rescues Jacques, and foils the sabotage attempt by almost singlehandedly killing nearly every villain in sight, including Maltese. The decoy fire is pushed into the sea, and the Indians are rescued from the church, which is subsequently burned. The climactic confrontation between Finley and Paulo occurs the next day: after a lengthy sword duel -- pretentiously staged, presumably in imitation of Samurai films -- Paulo is killed. While the Indians perform a thanksgiving dance, Finley and his wife ride slowly towards the setting sun.

The Master Gunfighter is an overblown, ponderous Western that is more interesting for its sporadic, splendidly scenic coastal photography, than for its political content. It is clear, nonetheless, that Laughlin has a serious statement to make about historical atrocities against American Indians, and probably expects us to ferret out contemporary parallels as well -- the one between the Galeta and My Lai massacres being particularly obvious. The Americans, however, are really incidental villains in Laughlin's film -- although a "greedy and hypocritical American government" is ultimately responsible for Don Santiago's desperation, and the same government is later more interested in finding out where its gold is, than in avenging the real tragedy of Galeta. The more immediate and deadlier villains are the Spanish, principally represented by Don Santiago's son, Paulo, and his ranch foreman, Maltese, each of whom is committed to order, discipline, and a blind, homocidal devotion to "our bloodlines, our culture, the traditions of our people." Laughlin seems intrigued by them and respectful of their commitment to that code, but -- understandably enough -- he cannot humanize mass murderers to the point where we acquire any real understanding of their desperation. We never manage to view Paulo and the others as sympathetic relics of a dying culture, though Laughlin tugs us in that direction.

The Indians themselves are -- without exception, of course -- a "gentle, peaceful people," but they function in the film as the objects of moral and physical contention, rather than as flesh-and-blood individuals hopelessly caught in the vise of dying and ascendant imperial powers. They are superstitious, too, and will not go near the abandoned village of Galeta because circling crows indicate it may be haunted by "crow demons." And they are portrayed as exasperatingly docile and timid -- as when Chorika, the survivor of the Galeta massacre, pleads with the new victims to leave the church lest they be killed, and the response is stunned silence and passivity. Chorika is herself the principal Indian character in the film -- a spirited "ten-cent whore" whose mistreatment provides the excuse for some of the violence.

Laughlin needs "excuses" for the violence, because The Master Gunfighter -- like the "Billy Jack" movies[7] -- is laced with a manifest pacifism that is constantly undermined by the exigencies of the situation. "The Laughlin character talks like a liberal but behaves like a reactionary, and therein lies the confusion," said Variety. More accurately, he talks like a pacifist, but is constantly provoked to righteous violence. A typical scene occurs after Chorika is verbally and physically abused by several men from the Circle'K' ranch. Finley rescues her, but goes out of his way to avoid a confrontation with her tormentors. "I don't want to kill you, son," he says to a young man who is spoiling for a shootout. But the young man persists. He will not endure the shame of having backed down. Finley sighs, and shakes his head slowly: "I'll be the one who'll be shamed. I'll ask your forgiveness...." Finley turns away, but the poor fellow is incorrigible: he draws, and Finley shoots him dead. Laughlin's pacifism is about as convincing and as suspenseful as countless Hollywood Westerns that started with the hero "hanging up" his pearl-handled pistols and settling down to a quiet life of "sod-busting." We know that the pistols have to be strapped on sooner or later -- we would feel cheated if they were not -- so it is just a matter of waiting for sufficient provocation: in some cases, the incineration of the hero's crops can do the trick, but other stalwarts are provoked by nothing short of the slaughter of families and burning of homesteads.

Though Laughlin's directorial viewpoint is muddled, his performance as an actor remains the film's most devastating liability. With a poncho reminiscent of Clint Eastwood's in the early Sergio Leone Westerns, Laughlin's repertoire of facial expressions makes stones and trees seem versatile by comparison. The performance, the message, and the subverted pacifism add up to a grown man's fantasy of redemption and retribution.

Summary and conclusions

With respect to political content, the common thread that runs throughout the message movies is a mood of apprehensiveness: (1) an apprehensiveness about authority and conformity, principally manifested in dire, unreal warnings about fanatical political movements (Lisztomania, The Rocky Horror Picture Show), or in vague allegories about fascism as a kind of madness (Down the Ancient Stairs); (2) an apprehensiveness about the state itself or specific institution of the state, notably the military and what it stands for (Conduct Unbecoming, Whiffs), the machinery of national security (The Secret) and the shortcomings of legal systems (Lipstick, Recommendation for Mercy); and (3) an apprehensiveness about the values of the dominant culture in specific social systems, culminating in assertions about culpability in the mistreatment of minorities (Man Friday, The Master Gunfighter). Each of the films can be fairly characterized as liberal, in a limited "anti-establishment" sense, but not in a way that is likely to be very disturbing to those of a more conservative or traditional orientation.[8] Although each film is didactic, in that a point of view is being propagated in a fairly straightforward manner, they are not films of depth or vision. We shall conclude this chapter with a consideration of some of their inadequacies.

To a very great extent, the message movies are films of safe "good intentions." Their political interest stems from the well-meaning articulation of opinions with which few reasonable people could disagree -- in the context of the films. The points of view are too often presented in such a heavy-handed, if not ferocious, way that even the most recalcitrant viewer seems likely to be intellectually or emotionally bludgeoned into submission. No one can resist being appalled by the brutal rapes (and their consequences) in Lipstick, for example, or by the state-sanctioned murders in The Secret, or by the young man's ordeal in Recommendation for Mercy. But the sensational treatment of these various topics has the curious effect of -- momentarily, we would argue -- robbing them of their controversy. In the context of Lipstick, there is no question but that Chris, the rape victim, is unfairly treated in court, or that she is ultimately justified in shooting the rapist. What might have been presented as an issue on which reasonable people could have fundamental disagreements, is instead presented as an issue on which there is one obviously correct opinion which only the transparently malevolent would dispute. The film is manipulative to the point that even the most ardent civil libertarian might emotionally applaud the slaying of the heroine's tormentor. At that level of "discourse ," the film becomes politically non-denominational -- everyone responds the same way. But this is likely to be a fleeting unanimity; when the house lights go up, some will feel they have been had -- that if the director had a legitimate case to make, or if he knew how to make it, he would not need to tug at our heartstrings in such a disconcerting way.

We do not mean to suggest here that "there are two sides to every question," and that one ought not make judgments about which point of view is correct. But in the movies, as a real life, opinions seem more intelligent when they have been formulated in the light of a sensible comprehension of the logical and emotional bases of contrary viewpoints. Films like Lipstick would be stronger and more persuasive if they betrayed any notion of why other well meaning people would be anxious about the solutions such films endorse or imply. As it is, some message movies not only deal unfairly with the issues they raise, but they are also likely to mislead sympathetic viewers into underestimating the strength, intelligence, and viability of their opponents.

If the content of this set of films suggest good intentions, it suggests also that the film-makers are unwilling to trust audiences to make "correct" inferences in the absence of unambiguous statements of purpose. That surely is behind the failure to treat opposing viewpoints in a credible -- not to say sympathetic -- way; and that too is why many of the films include a scene in which "the point" has to be recited by a major character looking directly into the camera, or highlighted in an equally obvious fashion. There is no "missing the point" of such films, but there is no going beyond the point either; they are neither thoughtful nor thought provoking.

Stemming directly from this mistrust of audiences is the emergence of "positive" sterotypes of the kind we have seen in The Master Gunfighter and Man Friday. In their zeal to denounce racism and colonialism -- evils which gifted film-makes have more eloquently attacked -- Jack Gold and Tom Laughlin, as we have seen, fall back on stereotypes that are themselves contemptible. Interestingly, that weakness has been attributed to earlier message movies, as will be apparent from comments by Pauline Kael in an essay written over twenty years ago:

> It is the enlightened message, e.g., Gentleman's Agreement, that people must be educated into tolerance; prejudice is wrong. Any motives indicated for the prejudice must be superficial or wrong-headed, so that the prejudiced character can be exposed, if not to himself, at least to the audience....[I]n Crossfire the Jew-hater was a fanatic who never learned; but what the audience saw was once again the liberal sterotype: the murdered Jew was a decorated war hero. (Suppose the murdered man was a draft dodger, or a conscientious objector, would the audience then feel no sting, would the fanatic have been justified in killing him?)... By a quota system war films admitted carefully selected minority representatives, clean-cut Jewish and Negro soldiers whose participation in the national defense apparently gave them a special claim to equality over and above mere membership in the human species. Can it be that even in liberal thinking there is a stigma which can be rubbed off only if minority characters behave heroically?[9]

Films such as Stanley Kramer's Guess Who's Coming to Dinner? are more faithful to the liberal sterotype Kael is talking about, but Man Friday and The Master Gunfighter are clearly contemporary variations on it. And the variations are important: in the earlier films, sympathy for the minority was elicited on the grounds that the individual in question was impeccably faithful to the values of the dominant culture -- he was a war hero, a hard worker, a "family man," and so on; in the films by Gold and Laughlin, the dominant culture is itself held to be spiritually inferior, and the minority is alluded to in terms that suggest it represents a superior civilization. Ultimately, the nobel savages of Man Friday, and the solemn chiefs, docile warriors, and wide-eyed children of The Master Gunfighter, seem rooted in a superficial appreciation of the Red Power, Black Power and ecological political movements, by sincere, mediocre minds.

In many ways, the films discussed in this chapter have been very disappointing. On the one hand, they are characterized by conscious efforts on the part of filmmakers to make political or politically relevant statements -- albeit box office considerations are not set aside; in that sense, they ought to be our cup of tea. On the other hand, only one of the films is aesthetically a cut above mediocre (The Secret) and not one of them has depth, subtlety, or anything terribly compelling to say. This brings to mind a "maddening paradox" formulated by a film critic who was both politically committed and aesthetically demanding: "the freer and more overtly engaged a film becomes, the more restricted it seems in its dramatic fullness and thematic complexity."[10] We would not suggest for a moment that there is an inevitable trade-off between overt political content and artistic merit -- nor does the author of the quoted material -- but that certainly is a debilitating aspect of the message films we have looked at. What is ultimately unsatisfying is that the political content itself is such that any trade-off with artistic merit was probably a bad bargain.

For all that, one must recognize that the mood of apprehensiveness we have identified in the message movies cannot be treated as an isolated phenomenon having nothing to do with broader trends evident in the sample. It will be apparent in the next chapter, for example, that a concern with the way systemic factors impinge upon individuals was very much on the minds of other film-makers -- film-makers whose vision, we shall argue, is more profound and complex than anything manifest in the message movies. The evidence we have cited in the present chapter regarding individuals as victims of state institutions, and the related emphasis on individual survival and integrity, are matters that we will consider again in our concluding chapter, when we offer a synthesis of our findings and speculate on the possibility of a "political culture" of the cinema.

ENDNOTES

1. Robert Chappetta, "The Meaning Is Not The Message *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 25 (4), p. 10. Though his comments range widely at times, Chappetta's article is principally a review of Lasse Forsberg's *Mistreatment* and Bernardo Bertolucci's *The Spider's Strategem,* neither of which can be called commercial in the usual sense of that word. (So far as we can ascertain, neither film has been released in Canada, but that makes Chappetta's review article no less interesting and useful.) Nonetheless, the distinction Chappetta has made is similar to the one we have tried to develop, especially when he contrasts the style of the two films mentioned and the style of "message melodramas like *Z* in which everything is packaged for us and clearly labelled." Consider, too, his passing remarks about political content in commercial films:

> ... [T]here is a tendency to block the very perception of a film as being political or as having political overtones, 'content' being ignored as boring, especially *political* content, in however small a measure. Some of the most interesting popular American films of the last few years have had political overtones, even if they do not make political statements: *Easy Rider*, *The Wild Bunch*, *M*A*S*H* , *The Godfather*. And this principle works even if one does not like the politics of the film: I found *Dirty Harry* the most exciting Don Siegel film in years, even if I am suspicious of the politics the film implies.

2. V.F. Perkins, *Film as Film*, (Middlesex: Penguin books, 1972), pp. 154-5. Perkins' book is nothing short of outstanding, and has much to commend it to serious students of film. While no brief quote can do it justice, the following is almost a short summary of the book's principal theme:

> If the director is successful in his attempt to examine subject through story, theme through action, then significance becomes so deeply embedded in the movie that it seems a by-product of the narrative. Conversely, the intention to make a statement becomes unmistakeable

> when the message is detached from the dynamic of the movie, tacked on to its structure rather than built into it. (Ibid., p. 176.)

As might be expected, Perkins prefers the comparatively unobtrusive significant statements of commercial directors such as Hitchcock and Preminger, rather than the ostentatious "art films" of European auteurs such as Antonioni. The book is not without its weaknesses, but it is absorbing and contentious every step of the way. The minimal implication for the analysis of political content in films is that political ideas and values -- like other kinds of significance -- can be (and often are) unspectacular by-products of the film narrative, rather than being openly propagated statements. But Perkins is not simply making an empirical claim; he is proposing aesthetic criteria as well. He would almost certainly argue that, aesthetically speaking, political content functions best when it is least obvious. (That, of course, does not necessarily imply that what is aesthetically pleasing will be effective as education and/or propaganda.)

3. Tewkesbury's comment appears in her introduction to the published screenplay for Nashville: "As you read the screenplay, remember this was written for a visual medium capable of giving assorted information to our perception on so many levels and in so many layers that we cannot systematically record it. With that in mind, all you need to do is add yourself as the twenty-fifth character and know that whatever you think about the film is right, even if you think the film is wrong." See: Joan Tewkesbury, Nashville (New York: Bantam Books, 1976); pages unnumbered. Her remarks constitute something of an overstatement, of course, since there are a great many interpretations that the film simply cannot sustain. To suggest that a film can sustain any interpretation is tantamount to saying it is beyond interpretation -- which is quite different from claiming, as we would in the case of Nashville, that several interpretations are possible.

4. See, for example: Stephen Farber, "Russellmania," Film Comment, Vol. 11 (6), pp. 40-47.

5. Quoted in: Patrick McGilligan and Janet Maslin, "Ken Russell Faces the Music," Take One, Vol. 4 (12), p. 19.

6. Down the Ancient Stairs is one of several "asylum" films in the present sample. The others are One Flew Over the

Cuckoo's Nest and The Devil is a Woman, both of which will be discussed in the next chapter. The Secret, which is also examined in the current chapter, opens with a scene in an asylum or jail.

7. Billy Jack (1971) and The Trial of Billy Jack (1974) have yielded in excess of $60,000,000 in North American theatre rentals alone. (The Billy Jack character appeared in an earlier Laughlin film, Born Losers (1967), though that film is reputed to be more of a routine motorcycle movie.) Billy Jack is a "half-breed" Vietnam veteran whose inclinations toward pacifism are invariably thwarted by the provocations of white racists -- principally directed against the "free school" with which Billy Jack is associated. The films function on an absolutely primitive frustration-aggression level; in a typical scene, jeering thickset men prevent an Indian child from buying an ice-cream cone and "bleach" her with white flour as a perverse joke; the sequence seems interminable, cultivating the audience's anger until Billy Jack's inevitable arrival -- kicking heads and faces in exasperation. (He is a martial arts expert.)

Laughlin's latest project is reported to be a re-make of Frank Capra's classic, Mr. Smith Goes to Washington. It will be called Billy Jack Goes to Washington; according to a Washington dispatch in the Calgary Herald (Sept. 16, 1975), Billy Jack will become a U.S. Senator in the new film and Laughlin has retained Ralph Nader "to help formulate Senator Jack's policy positions and grassroots campaign."

8. Terms like "liberal" and "conservative" are constantly shifting in meaning, of course, and there is a sense in which apprehensiveness about the state can be interpreted as a conservative rather than liberal stance -- though it seems very much related to state involvement in and control over economic matters. In the contemporary political climate, apprehensiveness about liberal domocracies as potentially malicious instruments of repression, latent fascism, racism, militarism, and so on, is clearly associated with the liberal end of the political spectrum. It is in that sense that the message films are deemed "liberal."

Lipstick is a rather ambiguous case. Its principal theme -- the so-called "feminist view of rape" -- certainly has overtones of liberalism. But in its strident criticism of the rights afforded accused persons, the film seems more clearly rooted in the conservative law-and-order tradition of Death Wish, Walking Tall, *et al*.

9. Pauline Kael, "Movies, the Desperate Art," in Daniel Talbot (ed.) *Film: An Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 61-62.

10. James Paul Gay, "Red Membranes, Red Banners," *Sight and Sound*, Vol. 41 (2), p. 98. It should be remembered that we are extrapolating Gay's remarks out of a context that is very different from the present one: his was a discussion of the prospects for a politicization of the Swedish cinema , while we are discussing routine North American commercial releases.

CHAPTER FOUR

POLITICAL CONTENT IN 'ANALYTICAL' FILMS

> "Let me point out two things. Number one: All of us are deeply involved with politics whether we know it or not, and whether we like it or not. And...number two...we can do something about it."
>
> Hal Phillip Walker in Nashville

Introduction

We come now to our fifth designated category -- films which include complex social and political analysis, or "analytical" movies. Some points of clarification are in order before we proceed. It should be kept in mind, first of all, that we are not using the term "analytical" to imply that all of the fifteen films discussed herein contain analyses that might be regarded as sound and sophisticated in a restricted, academic sense. That is more than one can or ought to expect of commercial cinema. What characterizes these movies as a set is that each of them attends in some important way to political relationships and values, and each of them does so in a way that is complex relative to what we have seen in the lesser categories. To bluntly re-state the point: no one would suggest that Sam Peckinpah ought to be writing articles for social science journals, but beyond any doubt, Peckinpah's films deal with fundamental questions about the nature of man and how men ought to live.

A second point to be noted is that we do not presume to exhaust the meaning of these movies -- a caveat that has validity throughout this work, and one that is of particular relevance in the present chapter. As film content becomes more complex, and as "vision and experience" become at least as important as unambiguous messages, plot summaries become increasingly inadequate. A relatively sparçe summary can adequately capture the flavor of a movie like Who?, for example, but brief story synopses would be entirely inappropriate for films such as One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Barry Lyndon, and Nashville, and might be seriously misleading in terms of conveying any sense of how those films worked. What we propose to do, then, is to describe the analytical films in as much detail as seems reasonable, and -- keeping in mind that this is more of a filmographical essay than an exhaustive treatment -- suggest some general, politically relevant lines of interpretation.[1]

For organizational purposes, the analytical movies have been divided into several identifiable sub-groups, and will be treated in the following order: two "asylum" movies, with implied and explicit political content (One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and The Devil Is a Woman); four films with futuristic or historical settings (A Boy and His Dog, Robin and Marian, Barry Lyndon, and The Man Who Would Be King); two European movies by unabashedly political directors (Swept Away... and Special Section); half a dozen films dealing with contemporary American politics, either from a "street" perspective (Hustle, Dog Day Afternoon, and Taxi Driver), or in relation to specific institutions of government (Three Days of the Condor, The Killer Elite, and All the President's Men); and lastly, Nashville.

Asylums

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Milos Forman's film of Ken Kesey's celebrated novel, opens with pre-dawn shots of a solitary car speeding towards a mental institution, the inmates of which are already rising and settling into their normal, humdrum routine. The spiritlessness of the setting is typified when -- in the opening sequence, and frequently thereafter -- a saccharine, disembodied voice introduces "medication time," while the arm of a record player is lowered once more to the beginning of Mantovani's "Charmaine." The car brings a new patient to the institution: Randle Patrick McMurphy (Jack Nicholson), 38, who has been transferred from a penal farm for observation, but is believed to be feigning insanity to avoid work detail. (Officially, he is "resentful in his attitude towards work.") We learn too that McMurphy has been arrested five times on charges of assault, and has been convicted of statutory rape -- though we never think of him that way, primarily because he cheerfully and irresistably excuses himself. ("Five fights, huh? Rocky Marciano had forty, and he's a millionaire." And the alleged rape victim was "fifteen going on thirty.")

McMurphy is continuously, and often hilariously, in contempt of authority, discipline, and routine -- all of which are sacred in the eyes of the formidable, humorless head nurse, Mildred Ratched (Louise Fletcher). It is Nurse Ratched versus McMurphy throughout the film -- she with the tacit support of the hospital administrators and the enforcing power of a couple of mean, muscular ward attendants (the notorious "black boys" of Kesey's novel); and McMurphy with the growing admiration and support of many of the patients on his ward. Prominent among the latter are; Chief Bromden, an immensely tall, shuffling Indian who is universally and wrongly believed to be deaf and dumb; Billy Bibbit, a stuttering, mother-fixated young man who comes to idolize McMurphy; Harding, an articulate middle-aged patient who is obsessed with the idea his wife may be unfaithful; Cheswick, an intensely anxious, but deferent man who grows surprisingly angry and assertive as the film progresses; and Taber, who is about McMurphy's age and more like him than any of the others -- though Taber's rebelliousness manifests itself in impatient, angry outbursts rather than in controlled, derisive attempts to undermine the system he regards with so much contempt.

The film is structured around a series of escalating confrontations between the two major protagonists, interspersed with banal discussions of McMurphy's sanity by medical staff, and tediously unproductive, degrading group therapy sessions presided over by Nurse Ratched. (It is typical of the head nurse's attitude towards individuality that she believes time spent in the company of others is therapeutic, while time spent by oneself is pointless brooding.) Though its tone is more even than the emotional roller-coaster of Kesey's book, the film too has its high points. A notable example is McMurphy's attempt to have some of the inmates' chores re-scheduled so they can all watch a World Series baseball game on television. He raises the matter at a group meeting, and is told that such a change in ward policy must be voted on by all the patients. He carries the vote by what seems like a sufficient margin, but Nurse Ratched belatedly insists that the "chronics" vote too -- the "chronics," as distinct from the "acutes," are hopeless cases who are apparently unaware of what is going on around them. With the "chronics" thus enfranchized, McMurphy needs one more vote to carry the day; he desperately and vainly canvasses the "chronics," and is about to give up, when, at the last minute, Chief Bromden dramatically raises his hand. But it is too late, says Nurse Ratched. The meeting was over and the vote was tied. Momentarily infuriated, McMurphy turns defeat into victory: to the astonishment and delight of the other patients, who gradually join him, he sits before the blank television screen and does an exhilarating, noisey play-by-play commentary on an imaginary game. Nurse Ratched is livid.

It is this kind of spirit that earns McMurphy his following among the other patients, and his position is further enhanced when he hijacks a bus and takes them on an utterly unauthorized, and idyllically portrayed, fishing expedition. McMurphy is liked not just because of his rebelliousness -- indeed, some of the men are wary of it -- but also because he refuses to regard his fellow inmates as insane. (You're no crazier than the average asshole walkin' around the street," he tells tham at one point.) They learn from McMurphy, but they also disappoint and infuriate him, especially when he finds out that they are all voluntary committals, except for Taber, Chief Bromden, and himself, and that his disruptive antics are likely to prolong his term of involuntary confinement. (Too naively, McMurphy had believed he was only serving the remainder of his prison sentence.)

Matters take a tragic turn for McMurphy, beginning with a group therapy session in which a newly assertive Cheswick refuses to be silenced in the matter of the withholding of cigarette rations. When the attendants try to "subdue" Cheswick, McMurphy attacks one of them and is joined by Chief Bromden. As a result of this outburst, all three patients are dispatched to the "disturbed" ward for electro-shock therapy. In the waiting area, Bromben speaks to McMurphy for the very first time (much to McMurphy's delight) and the two discuss the possibility of escape. But it is not to be. After a gastly scene in which McMurphy is administered shock treatments, we see him staggering onto the ward in a grim, prophetic parody of his eventual fate. Again, he discusses escape plans with Chief Bromden, but the chief has decided he is not ready yet, so McMurphy will leave by himself. On the night of his intended departure, he smuggles two girls into the asylum and, after the night attendant is persuaded to co-operate, and all-night party takes place. McMurphy says his touching farewells, but at the last minute, young Billy Bibbit -- his most devoted and most vulnerable admirer -- makes some vague overtures about the possibility of sex with one of the girls. McMurphy insists that Billy have his wish, and persuades one of the girls to go along. While Billy loses his virginity, McMurphy and the others doze off, to be awakened eventually by the morning arrival of Nurse Ratched and her henchmen. Nurse Ratched is particularly angry and "disappointed" in Billy (who no longer stutters!) and she promises to tell his mother about his "shameful" behavior. She bullies him into "confessing" that McMurphy had forced him to have sex with the girl, and his stammer returns with that admission. Chastened, Billy Bibbit is sent to a room to await the arrival of a doctor. Moments later he is found dead in a pool of blood -- a suicide. When an obviously shaken Nurse Ratched insists that the patients carry on with their "normal routine," McMurphy, grief-stricken and enraged, tries to strangle her with his bare hands.

In the final sequence of the film, McMurphy is returned to the ward in an unconscious state, and it is apparent that he has been lobotomized. Chief Bromden visits him to plan another escape -- Bromden feels he is ready now -- but realizes that the spiritless, vacant-eyed body is not the "real" McMurphy. "I wouldn't leave you this way,", he says, holding McMurphy close to him. "You're coming with me. Let's go." Then, in what is clearly intended as an act of mercy, he smothers McMurphy with a pillow. Earlier, McMurphy had boasted he could wrench a large, monolithic water cooler from its moorings and hurl it through a window to make good his escape. He couldn't budge it, and he was angry at the satisfaction this gave the smug, docile onlookers. "But I tried, didn't I?" he said to them, "At least I did that." Now, Bromden slowly lifts the monolith, tearing pipes asunder, causing water to gush upwards to form a veritable fountain. He hurls the water cooler through a window; at the moment of impact, we cut to Taber, who sits bolt upright, laugh maniacally, and raises a defiant clenched fist; other voices shout "He made it! He made it!" Then, back to Bromden, who disappears into darkness -- perfectly punctuating a film that had opened with McMurphy's dawn arrival.

One Flew Over the Cockoo's Nest functions on at least three different, but closely interrelated, levels. It can be interpreted, first of all, as a realistic depiction of personnel and treatment in a modern mental institution. This, we would suggest, is the least useful approach to the film, because it is quite out of harmony with the larger-than-life, mythic proportions of the McMurphy character, and with the equally archetypal Nurse Ratched. It is true, of course, that Milos Forman's directorial style is functional and realistic -- in this film and in others -- but we do not experience the film as anything ressembling a documentary record of what is happening on Nurse Ratched's ward, and it is difficult to justify an evaluation of it in those terms. During the fishing expedition, for example, a realistic reading of the film would prompt us to wonder about the irresponsibility of a convicted assailant taking a group of mental hospital patients out to sea in a "borrowed" boat. Surely there was a good possibility that someone could be hurt, scared, sick, or even drowned; realistically, and in spite of the fact that they wear life jackets, we would wonder whether adequate safety precautions had been taken. But at that point in the film, notions such as "adequate safety precautions" have been completely undone; only Nurse Ratched and her allies would be capable of dampening the scene with such a bureaucratic wet blanket. What happens is, we intuitively realize that we do not have to worry about such things; we respond to the scene for its symbolic value -- it is the complete negation of bureaucracy -- not as a realistic and potentially tragic state of affairs.

This is not to suggest that the film is completely without interest as a fictionalized "documentary" of a mental institution. As Richard Combs has indicated in Sight and Sound,

> it sets up definite, but indefinable, critical vibrations as to just how far the picture of mental health treatment is typical and currently applicable (the film was shot in the Oregon State Hospital, with the participation of some of the staff and patients, and apparently there were objections to one violent scene of electric shock treatment)...

And there is no question but that the film itself was an issue within some segments of the mental health community -- especially with respect to whether therapists and therapeutic institutions had been fairly portrayed, and whether the film was misleading in seeming to imply that the "insane" would be quite all right if left to their own devices.[2] Also on a realistic level, the film broaches a number of sensitive issues, including the status of American Indians, the morality of shock therapy and lobotomy, and -- in a surprisingly non-controversial way -- the ethics of mercy killing.

But it is also true that Forman and Kesey are interested in issues broader than the therapeutic ones, and are saying something about the larger society. Says Forman:

> I can only define 'mental illness' as an incapacity to adjust within normal measure to ever-changing, unspoken rules. If you are incapable of making these constant changes, you are called by your environment crazy. Which of course indicates that mental illness is a social disease. And that's what the book is about: it's a metaphor of society.[3]

The book is indeed a metaphor of society, but in a more explicit and more sensational way than is the film. Told from Chief Bromden's subjective viewpoint, the novel went on at length -- and in a very obvious way -- about an ominous "Combine" which saw to it that everyone was "controlled" (i.e., conformed to the rules in a rigid, dispassionate way); those who were not properly controlled were put in prisons or mental institutions to have their controls "installed" -- and that sometimes meant a lobotomy. The idea was to turn rebels and misfits into burned-out, controllable zombies.[4]

On the level of metaphor, Forman's vision seems more of a bureaucratic nightmare than was Kesey's. One aggravating perversion of bureaucracy is a devotion to rules for their own sake, rather than as means to ends; and that is precisely what Nurse Ratched stands for. A veneer of good intentions cannot conceal (or justify) her deep devotion to procedure, routine, and uniformity. It is, perhaps, her veneer of good intentions that saves the film from being an all-too-facile drama of a "Wise-Cracking Free Spirit" versus "The Soulless Bureaucracy." What Forman is suggesting is that the rationalization of decisions in terms of the patients' good is itself a provocation.

Let us consider an example. McMurphy, in a more or less polite way, asks Nurse Ratched to turn down the volume of the music (Mantovani again), because "I can't hear myself think." She explains, too sweetly, that some of the older men are hard of hearing and the music is all they have got. Intellectually, this is not a foolish response, but we sense that it is not sincere; and her disarming good intentions make her refusal all the more intolerable and frustrating -- she has defied him to say "To hell with the other patients. I don't care about them." An ostensibly legitimate request has been made to seem selfish and a contemptable inflexibility has been made to seem like charity. That is the substance of Forman's vision. As Pauline Kael has said (The New Yorker):

> Instead of the giant-breasted terror of novel, Louise Fletcher's Nurse Ratched ressembles Shirley Temple Black.. She's the smiling, well-organized institutional type -- the dean of women who was disappointed in you, the phone-company supervisor who tells you why she has to interrupt your service for nonpayment. Nurse Ratched's soft, controlled voice and girlishly antiseptic manner always put you in the wrong; you can't cut through the crap in her -- it goes too deep....She thinks she's doing good for people, and she's hurt -- she feels abused -- if her authority is questioned...

The third layer of meaning which will be briefly noted as a quasi-religious one. If McMurphy had been, as Kael put it, a "jock Christ" in Kesey's novel, he is less obviously a redeemer in Forman's film. But he is a redeemer all the same. He arrives at the hospital as a new day is dawning; he cultivates his apostles, and they sometimes prove unworthy of him, even to the point of tragic, innocent betrayal (Billy Bibbit); and he liberates them by his suffering and death. This liberation is less dramatic in the film, since only Bromden actually leaves (in the book, several of the others check out, and several transfer to other wards); but Taber's clenched fist, and the background shouts of "He made it!" surely signify a transformation of the others as well.

Religious overtones of purification, rebirth and redemption are also evidenced by Forman's use of water symbolism. The fishing expedition at sea is a joyful highlight of the film; McMurphy squirts water at the other inmates during one of his first unruly episodes; and, of course, the water cooler with springs gushing forth as it is torn from its base is the most potent symbol in the film. It is a symbol which suggests a dramatic difference in tone between the film and the novel: in the novel, the monolithic object was an electrical control panel, and the snapping of wires suggested a more violent rupture of the Combine's grip; in the film, the Combine is never mentioned, of course, and the water imagery suggests a more personal, internal transformation than the active destruction of external controls implied by Kesey. In that respect, the film seems less revolutionary and more passive.

Of secondary importance relative to One Flew Over *the Cuckoo's Nest* is *The Devil Is a Woman*, a British-Italian co-production directed by Damiano Damiani from a screenplay based on a story of his. That title, it must be pointed out, makes no sense whatsoever in the context of Damiani's film (originally called *The Tempter*), which is both a serious treatment of Roman Catholicism in the modern world and a convincing appreciation of the strengths and limitations of faith and certainty.

Rodolfo, a young writer, meets Polish Monsignor Pollaco Badensky at an outdoor cafe, and is asked to help the priest compose his memoirs, which principally center around World War II and its aftermath. Badensky, we discover, is an accused Nazi collaborator and he intends his book to be a colorful war diary and "a plea for the defence." Rodolfo reluctantly agrees to take the assignment and temporarilly moves into the religious hostel where Badensky is staying. The interior of the hostel is the major setting of the film, and -- without facetious intent -- it could be described as either a "Cuckoo's Nest" for Catholics or a *Grand Hotel* for sinners. (As Jill Forbes points out in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, the film is structured like *Grand Hotel*.) The hostel has been founded, and is run, by a devout, authoritarian nun, Sister Geraldine (Glenda Jackson), and it is a sanctuary and "treatment" center for those who have run afoul of the Roman Catholic Church and who are now (more or less) willingly trying to rehabilitate themselves. Like Nurse Ratched, Sister Geraldine uses group therapy sessions to constantly keep her charges off-balance and in her control, by stripping away their privacy and reinforcing their sense of guilt. In addition to Badensky, Sister Geraldine's guests include: Bishop Marquez, a Cuban prelate who had taken a liking to Fidel Castro -- "Cuba is no longer a bordello for American tourists" -- and who has denounced the Church's propensity to "play into the hands of the rich"; Prince Ottavio, a weak, indecisive young man who has committed incest with his sister; Emily, the widow of a murdered Bolivian "political police" officer, whom she betrayed to revolutionaries after falling in love with one of them -- it was "an execution, not a murder," she says, defending herself on the grounds that her lover would have been tortured to death by her husband; and a worker-priest, a minor character, who had organized and led a factory strike that ended in violence. (None of these transgressions are depicted; we are told about them by the characters.)

Rodolfo, the writer, is only a catalyst in this setting and is a less dominant character than, say, McMurphy in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. But he does openly challenge Sister Geraldine's authority, and tries to generate a more liberal, tolerant atmosphere. More importantly, perhaps, Rodolfo begins to undermine the climate of guilt that Sister Geraldine so clearly relies upon; when, for example, Badensky makes excuses for his collaboration with the Nazis -- "I was in the front line, watching Communism and atheism advance..." -- Rodolfo offers him reassurance rather than reproach: "You did exactly what Pope Pius XII did." The subversion of Sister Geraldine's regime creates a climate of conflict and moral uncertainty that is apparently more than Prince Ottavio can bear, and he commits suicide. After an investigation, Geraldine's superiors (modern, administrative clerics) order her to rearrange her priorities: she must abandon the group therapy sessions, straighten out her finances, and concentrate on accommodating visitors who have come to see the Holy Father. In a final group session, Geraldine's failings are aired, and Emily, who had been seduced by Rodolfo, plays a key role: "You're not human," she tells Geraldine. "You love prying into other people's secrets..." Geraldine, she charges, considers herself "superior, untouchable, perfect."

Ultimately disillusioned, the various guests check out of the hostel to assume their respective places in the external world. Badensky completed his book, only to find that the Church hierarchy feels he has slandered Pius XII; his long sought absolution is now made conditional upon his agreement to withhold the book from publication -- an offer he initially turns down. Emily, who left the hostel with Rodolfo, soon realizes she is afraid of his tolerance and yearns for the stability and certainty of faith. She leaves Rodolfo, and he goes to the hostel to inquire as to her whereabouts. Incredibly, Emily and the others are once again in Sister Geraldine's care. Geraldine offers Rodolfo sanctuary, emphasizing the security and certainty of faith. With some regret, he declines. In the final sequence of the film Rodolfo is shown washing his face and drinking water from a fountain; the brightness of daylight contrasts sharply with what Jill Forbes (Monthly Film Bulletin) has called the "antiseptic grey" of the hostel interior, and Rodolfo laughs in apparent satisfaction that he is out of it.

The Devil Is a Woman, notwithstanding its melodramatic aspects, is better than a plot summary can convey, though it is by no means a work of great artistic merit. What is especially striking about the film is that it is not a simplistic anti-clerical, anti-Catholic diatribe in which liberal humanism is seen as a clearly superior alternative. As befits an Italian director, Damiani's presentation of the humanist-clericist conflict is riddled with ambiguity. He manages to convey the attractiveness of faith and conviction without ever seeming to endorse it wholeheartedly. Just as the authority of the Church -- or any any authority external to oneself -- can be comforting and oppressive, Sister Geraldine's authoritarianism is made to seem tyrannical and reassuring. When she discusses a theological point, for example, the absolute certainty she brings to bear on it (and Ms. Jackson's clipped, perfect English is an asset here) makes Rodolfo's tolerance seem just plain wishy-washy by comparison. It is rather as if one stumbled across Aquinas's "Five Proofs for the Existence of God" after a philosophical discussion in which the reality of one's _own_ existence were cast into doubt.

Damiani, we would suggest, frowns upon Geraldine's _abuse_ of authority -- and without a doubt, she does abuse it -- but he wants us to understand that authority itself is seductive. The corollary of this point is also underscored: liberal humanism is psychologically costly because it places a considerable burden on the individual to decide moral questions that would otherwise be resolved with paternalistic guidance. And as Damiani clearly indicates, the transition from one state to the other is highly problematic -- Rodolfo is as incapable of blindly accepting Sister Geraldine's guidance as Emily is of making independent moral choices. When Rodolfo cleanses himself at the end of the film, we share his sense of relief, but we do not pretend that he has made an easy choice.

The Devil Is a Woman is most interesting, then, as a dissertation on the seductiveness of authority and the burden of individual responsibility. This is a broader and more pertinent interpretation than those offered elsewhere.

Variety, for example, called the film a "drama about the conflict of contemporary ideas within the Catholic Church," but found Damiani's position to be quite unequivocal: "Damiani takes issue with blind devotion within the church structure, suggesting the futility of convent isolation in today's world." Jill Forbes called the film "a dramatization of the conflict between the world and the spirit" and, somewhat narrowly, suggested that its theme would be of little interest outside countries where the Church is still politically active; moreover, Ms. Forbes felt that Damiani had "accepted that salvation is still to be found within the Church," though that is definitely not clear in the film. On one point, however, there is no doubt: Damiani makes no excuses for the Church's reactionary or hypocritical politics. Since it is well known that the Church will rarely be found in the vanguard of left-wing political movements, the film's revelations on this point are less than startling; but it is of some significance, in the present context, that the moral conflicts which the film depicts are shown to have definite, tangible consequences in the real world of politics.

The future and the past

In terms of settings and themes, the "asylum" films we have discussed contrast rather sharply with the next four films which will be considered. Each of these depicts "another time, another place" -- 18th century England, 19th century India and Kafiristan, England in the days of the legendary Robin Hood, and America in the aftermath of an atomic holocost. The latter two films, A Boy and His Dog and Robin and Marian, will be discussed first, before we move on to a much lengthier consideration of the two most compelling items in this set: Barry Lyndon and The Man Who Would Be King.

A Boy and His Dog is the deceptively wholesome title of the only film in the sample with a futuristic setting. L. Q. Jones, an occasional assistant director and supporting actor in Sam Peckinpah's films, wrote the screenplay and directed the movie, which is based on a short story by Harlan Ellison.[5] The setting is America in the year 2024 in the aftermath of World War III and World War IV -- the latter taking place over a five day period. The leading characters are Vic, the eighteen-year-old "boy" of the title, and his remarkable canine companion, Blood. Blood has lost the ability to find his own food, but he has been blessed (or cursed) with intellect, telepathic powers, and an ability to detect the presence of women, who are in very short supply following the two wars. In the bombed-out wasteland that they inhabit, Vic is the rough-and-ready food forager, while Blood is teacher and strategist; survival is the dominant value, food is the only currency, violence is routine, and indifference to the welfare of others is the norm.

Two principal remnants of civilization have survived the world holocosts: "roverpaks" and "downunders." Roverpaks are bands of youthful male scavengers, or rovers, to whom the bleak, forbidding above-ground landscape has been completely abandoned; sometimes, one of the rovers will strike out on his own, becoming, as in Vic's case, a "solo." The downunders, as we shall see, are erstwhile middle-class Americans who live in underground cities that are models and caricatures of an idyllically imagined past.

One of the few reasonably safe retreats from the above-ground jungle is the shell of an old movie theatre, where roverpaks and solos congregate -- after checking in their weapons -- to watch grainy, bleached-out pornographic films that move haphazardly through a poorly functioning projector. On one such occasion, Blood "announces" telepathically that he senses the presence of a woman, possibly a downunder who has surfaced out of curiosity and who is sitting in the theatre disguised as a rover. Vic is doubtful, but his need to "use" a woman after an abstention of several weeks gets the better of him. Blood was right: they follow someone out of the theatre and watch from the shadows when, in a nearby building, she changes into her downunder clothes. Chivalry and courtship having long since given way to instinct, Vic proceeds to rape her; but he is interrupted when the building is raided by rampaging "screamers," who are never shown in the film and whose presence is never really explained -- except for Vic's remark that no one knows what the screamers are, "but if one of them touches you you're dead." Unseen or not, the screamers are terrifying, and Vic, no less than the girl, Quilla June, is relieved to survive their attack. They now settle down to less violent lovemaking, much to the annoyance of Blood, who had masterminded the defense against the screamers and who is now off to the sidelines muttering about the etymological derivation of the word "copulate."

Briefly stated, Quilla June comes between Vic and his dog. She talks about love, and tries to persuade Vic to go downunder with her, leaving Blood behind. When Vic refuses, she seizes the first opportunity to knock him unconscious and escapes to her home. With mixed feelings of affection and revenge, Vic decides to go after her -- against Blood's advice. After a touching farewell Blood is left to fend for himself.

Quilla June's downunder home is the "State of Topeka Kansas" -- a bizarre invention of the surviving middle classes who live safely and securely in a brightly lit, colorful world reminiscent of old Saturday Evening Post covers, and who indulge themselves in philosophical "insights" that seem torn from the pages of Reader's Digest. Topeka is run by "The Committee," whose faith in technological progress -- which, ironically, makes the downunder cities possible and necessary -- is equalled by a faith in fundamentalist religious values. But the barber shop quartets, uniformed highschool marching bands, tree-lined streets, and "small town folks" have a sinister quality about them. In fact, Topeka is a tyranny. Groups of sober-looking citizens routinely sit in church pews and, under the direction of the Committee, put deviants on trial. The principal crimes are "lack of respect, wrong attitudes, and failure to obey authority." The punishment is death, ususally at the hands of a farmer-robot wearing blue denim overalls, plaid shirt, straw hat, and a cheerful face with red-accentuated cheekbones. Everywhere, it seems, radio speakers broadcast nondescript music, recipes, and bland homilies: "We are never so happy or so unhappy as we imagine -- another helpful hint for living, from the Committee's Almanac."

Vic falls into all of this and is almost immediately captured. It is no coincidence. He had been lured downunder by Quilla June had hoped her achievement would secure a place for her on the Committee, which she eventually plans to overthrow -- apparently for entirely selfish reasons. As it happens, however, her political ambitions are doomed to frustration: the Committee has decided she must be a "homemaker."

Vic is angry and disgusted when he learns he has been used as a pawn by Quilla June and by the others. He finds his new environment boring, uncongenial, cloying, and -- not least of all -- threatening. "I wanna get into a good straightforward fight with some sonovabitch over a can of beans," he tells Quilla June. "I wanna get back in the dirt so I can feel clean." (That kind of pretentious writing is, happily, atypical of the film as a whole.) During a frightening outdoor session in which another group of "wrong attitude" people are tried and executed, Vic escapes, taking Quilla June with him. Above ground, they encounter Blood, who is near death from starvation. They have no food for him, and his condition is worsening by the minute.[1] Meanwhile, Quilla June tells Vic she loves him, and pleads with him to leave Blood behind and go on. Vic must choose, and he does: in the final scene, Vic and Blood are sitting before an open fire, basking in the satisfaction of full stomachs; Quilla June, we soon realize, has been the meal.

Black humor, cruel satire, and a gritty realism -- these are the attributes of L. Q. Jones' imperfect but compelling film. Its explicit political interest will be obvious: the satirical treatment of contemporary America, and the question it raises and answers about anarchic freedom versus order and "safety" in an oppressive state. As Peter Nellhaus has stated in Take One (one of the few publications in which this offbeat film was reviewed), the movie

> is clearly an allegory of contemporary society. Much better it is to be free, if hungry, in an anarchic society, than to submit to slavery in the name of security. Vic may be sexist and crude, but he is no hypocrite.

Nellhaus, however, may be overstating the case for anarchic freedom: one of the subtleties of the film is that the savagery of the above-ground world has parallels in the ostensibly more civilized underground cities -- an excellent example being the similarities and contrasts between Vic's rape of Quilla June (instinctual, brutal, thoughtless) and the Committee's "rape" of Vic when his semen is forcibly extracted (intellectual, antiseptic, premeditated). With that qualification in mind, the film does seem to be on the side of anarchy, given the choices that have to be made. But it is "right wing anarchism," not anarchism of the left.[6] The film is not a liberal diatribe against capitalist America by committed reformers -- to say nothing of social revolutionaries. The political point of view is not egalitarianism, co-operation, and brotherhood juxtaposed with inequality, capitalism, ill will; it is individual survival in a state in which tyranny masquerades as order and terror masquerades as security. For Jones and Ellison, a fight to the death over a barely recognizable can of Del Monte peaches is more meaningful, more worthy, more _human_ than the oppressive facade which calls itself Topeka.

One of the significant achievements of the film is the convincing way in which that vision is communicated. For all the caricature, the downunder civilization is initially a more familiar, more comforting, and more inviting place than the nightmare surface world of the roverpaks. By the end of the film, that preference has been reversed, and we welcome our return to the virtual state of nature above ground -- without in any way underestimating its terrors. Like so much of the film, that transition is accomplished with images and moods rather than with words. Indeed, it is the images of the film that are most memorable: the melancholic scene in which the rovers look for solace in the pathetic remnant of a movie house; an exotic, fierce-looking rover in a makeshift chariot that is an automobile pulled by a team of horses; the unseen terror of the screamers; and a vision of the world in which the "things that go bump in the night" are preferred alternatives to an intolerant, punitive, and unspeakably bland perversion of utopia.

Of the historical films (two of which star Sean

Connery), the least interesting is probably Richard Lester's Robin and Marian, from a screenplay by James Goldman. Connery plays Robin Hood to Audrey Hepburn's Maid Marian. In many ways, Lester's film is a melancholic, revisionist treatment of the Robin Hood legend -- an approach that is rather blatantly underscored by the opening and closing images of apples, first golden, then decayed. It should be noted that the relationship between Robin and Marian is treated no less romantically than it was in films of yesteryear.

As the movie opens, it has been twenty years since Robin and his Merry Men roamed Sherwood Forest, stealing from the rich to help the poor. During that time, Robin and Little John have been on the crusades with Richard the Lion Heart. Now Robin -- older, tired, and balding -- has grown disillusioned with the senseless carnage and his life in the service of the King. This disillusionment comes to a head at the seige of Chaluz Castle in France where Richard, upon realizing that some fabled treasure he was seeking is nonexistent, orders the slaughter of women, children, and a lone male defender. "I won't slaughter children for a piece of gold that never was," says Robin -- an unambiguous insubordination that goes unpunished because Richard does not survive the seige.

Upon Richard's death, Robin and Little John return to England, where everything is in some ways the same as before, and in some ways considerably different. Richard's tyrannical brother, John, is now King, of course, and the Sheriff of Nottingham is still the local oppressor, aided and abetted by the deceitful nobleman, Sir Ranulf de Pudsey. Friar Tuck and Will Scarlett are still hunting deer in the forest, but their old outlaw headquarters are overgrown with brush; the previous exploits of Robin and his Merry Men are now the stuff of exaggerated legends and ballads. Robin seems a little embarrassed by the legend and initially doubtful of his ability to live up to his real or imagined past -- despite exhortations from Friar Tuck and Will that he lead a rebellion against King John, and despite his genuine concern for the still-oppressed poor. One other aspect of Robin's past has changed dramatically: Maid Marian, he learns, entered a convent after his departure for the Crusades and is now Mother Superior of nearby Kirkly Abbey.

When King John orders the exile of the higher clergy from England, a defiant Marian is ordered taken prisoner by the Sheriff of Nottingham. Robin's rescue of her (against her will, since she was prepared to go to jail) becomes the occasion of his first encounter with the Sheriff and King John since returning from the Crusades. Robin and Little John follow this with the dramatic rescue of other nuns from Nottingham Castle itself -- an act of daring reminiscent of earlier days. Then, they retreat to Sherwood Forest, where the Merry Men re-group while Robin and Marian resume their love affair. With his appetite whetted by the encounters with the Sheriff of Nottingham, it now appears that Robin will indeed lead a rebellion: despite the protestations of Marian that he is likely to be killed, he is determined to test himself and to prove "I'm all I ever was." The news of his current exploits reinforces the Robin Hood Legend and prompts an influx of peasants to his forest lair, all aspiring to be Merry Men, but many too young or too old to fight.

After the Nottingham rescue, Robin and his men had been followed into Sherwood Forest by Sir Ranulf and a small band of soldiers. The latter were ambushed and killed, but Sir Ranulf was spared and sent back to King John with a warning from Robin: "This is my forest, and I live here as I like." Now, while Robin and Marian enjoy an idyllic romantic interlude, Sir Ranulf and the Sheriff amass an army of 200 strong and camp on the outskirts of the forest. To avoid what would almost certainly be a massacre of the peasants, Robin negotiates with the Sheriff to settle their conflict by a duel of champions -- i.e., a duel between themselves. After a brutal, bloody fight with swords, Robin slays the Sheriff, but he too is seriously wounded. And despite the terms under which the duel had been fought, Sir Ranulf orders his men to slaughter the peasants; in the ensuing battle, Ranulf is himself slain by Little John. Afterward, Marian and Little John take Robin to Kirkly Abbey, where he savors his personal victory over the Sheriff and resigns himself to imminent death: "I'll never have a day like this again...It's better this way." Marian resolves to join him in death, and administers poison first to herself, and then to him. Robin shoots an arrow into the air and asks Little John to bury them where it lands, and the film closes with the aforementioned shot of decayed apples.

Apart from its heavily romantic aspects, which need not detain us here, Robin and Marian is a self-conscious, mournful reflection on heroes and heroic deals. It is not simply that Robin is less than his legend promises; it is that his heroic ideals have been betrayed by the monarch to whom he had been devoted. And when disillusionment finally comes, Robin recognizes his own complicity in Richard's atrocities. "Richard is a bloody bastard," says Little John during the Chaluz incident. And Robin answers: "Are we any better? We serve him." A reflective, guilt-ridden hero, he later tells Marian about the murder and mutilation of Moslem children during the Crusades; when she asks him why her served, he replies with more than a trace of bitterness, "he was my king!" What Lester and Goldman seem determined to demythify is not so much heroic achievement as heroic causes; to a significant extent, the film is about heroic capabilities squandered in the service of unworthy leaders.

What the film does not try to do, however, despite Pauline Kael's claim to the contrary, is "expose heroism as a sick fraud." The Robin Hood of Lester's film is heroic in the sense that we do see him performing daring, courageous, and worthwhile acts. His tragedy is that the legend of Robin Hood has so outstripped the reality. In that sense, the film, as Jay Cocks has said in Time, is "about people trying to measure up to the myths created about them." Robin is simply incapable of turning a ragged group of impoverished volunteers into the fabled band of Merry Men, much less inspire and lead a genuine rebellion. What he is capable of is an act of individual courage and bravery which, futile though it may be, promises a more dignified death than slow, inevitable decay. Tragically, the mortal combat which was to have settled everything in fact settles nothing. Robin Hood dies a romantic, heroic death, but the grim realities which had so moved him are unchanged. "You're the enemy," he had told Sir Ranulf during the initial encounter in Sherwood. "You gobble good red meat and we eat bread and cheeze. The laws can't touch you...We can have our eyes put out for killing a deer." The film holds no promise that Robin's death will have altered that fundamental truth.

Finally, Lester invests the legend of Robin Hood with elements of apparent realism -- an aspect of the film that particularly impressed Gordon Gow in Films and Filming:

> Gone is the clean-limbed daydream Robin....Instead we see him plain, a man unwilling to accept the weight of his years....Palpably [Lester] has found it interesting to set against hygenic myth-movies the stench of historical fact. Here are twelfth-century men who sweat and do not wash much....Instead of the elegant swordplay of Hollywood's golden abysm... Lester gives us the sickening wound, the unsporting kick; and his incidental details (a pig grovelling for food; a pair of hands efficiently skinning a rabbit; a white hood for a black horse, with a hole through which the animal's eye stares out in alarm) banish the storybook connotations, merging legend and history in a denial of dreams.

While the realistic treatment is undeniable (the battles, wrote Newsweek's Katrine Ames, are "not quick, clean and virtuous, but protracted, gory and pointless"), not everyone was as impressed as Gow. For Geoff Brown, in the Monthly Film Bulletin, the film's realism is superficial and "only hides a core of mush, suddenly revealed when the hero and heroine settle down for love-making in an acre of corn, or when the dying Marian declares that she loves Robin more than sunlight, morning prayer and fruit."

Barry Lyndon, Stanley Kubrick's expensive and controversial film from the novel by William Makepeace Thackery, is principally set in eighteenth-century Ireland and England. Ostensibly, it is a stately, picturesque -- too picturesque, some say -- documentation of the rise and fall of the title character. (Barry Lyndon was born 'Redmond Barry,' and assumed the Lyndon surname later in life; in most instances, we shall refer to the character as 'Barry' -- the common denominator of the two names.) The film runs for more than three hours, and is stylistically and narratively divided into two parts. The first is concerned with the ambitions, machinations, trials and foibles of Redmond Barry, a pathetically amoral would-be gentleman of Irish extract, whose haphazzard career culminates in a marriage to Lady Lyndon, the wealthy widow whose surname he adopts. The second part of the film is about Barry Lyndon's misadventures among the ranks of gentlemen and nobles, his relationship with his wife, natural son, and step-son, and his ultimate fall from grace and ignominious end.

As the film opens, young Redmond Barry's father is killed in a duel and his mother -- an important grey eminence at various points in the story -- resolves that in spite of their poor financial circumstances Barry will become a gentleman. Unfortunately, the rather morose-looking Barry (who is referred to as a "lap dog" more than once in the film) is enfatuated with his cousin, Nora Brady, and takes exception to her flirtations with an English officer, Captain Quinn -- an unattractive man of money and property, which Nora and her family are anxious to acquire. When Nora's engagement to the English officer is announced, Barry provokes him into a duel and apparently kills him. With the help of his friend, Captain Jack Grogan, and his mother's meagre savings, Barry takes flight in order to escape arrest. He is soon relieved of his money and his horse during an encounter with a comically polite highwayman and accomplice; ashamed of having lost his small inheritance so soon, Barry decides to join the army so he might become a gentleman by bearing arms. He is in service briefly during the Seven Years' War and becomes quickly disillusioned -- especially upon witnessing the death of his friend, Captain Grogan. Moreover, Grogan has told him that Captain Quinn is alive and well, married to Nora; his "death" in the duel had been a hoax perpetrated by the Bradys to hasten Barry's departure and entice the cowardly Quinn into proceeding with the wedding.

Hapless and melancholic, but tenaciously clinging to the belief that the ranks of gentlemen constitute his "proper sphere," Barry deserts the army and sets out to make his way back to Ireland. He is captured, however, by a Prussian officer, Captain Potzdorf, and again pressed into military service -- this time on behalf of England's Prussian allies. He is eventually enlisted as a police spy and is assigned to gather intelligence about a visiting Irish diplomat, the Chevalier de Balibari. Upon his first encounter with the Chevalier, a fellow countryman, Barry breaks down and weeps, confessing his mission. He becomes a protege of the Chevalier, feeding false information to the Prussians and helping his mentor cheat at cards. After a brief interlude of this, the two escape Prussia and fashion successful gambling careers fleecing the idle rich. It is in a gambling salon that Barry first encounters the beautiful English countess, Lady Lyndon, into whose affections he insinuates himself, chiefly for the purposes of assuming the status for which he felt destined. When, in 1873, Lady Lyndon's ailing husband dies, she and Redmond Barry are married and the latter "assumes the style and title of Barry Lyndon."

The fall of Barry Lyndon is documented in the second part of the film. Lady Lyndon, we are told, becomes part of the "pleasant background of his existence" and he is openly unfaithful to her. Upon the birth of his son Bryan, and with the advice and encouragement of his mother, he resolves to seek "real security" for himself and -- more importantly -- for his heir. Real security, they have decided, must take the form of a peerage. Convinced that money can accomplish anything, Barry Lyndon proceeds to squander the Lyndon family fortune in ruinous attempts to buy a title. Among other things, he raises and equips a company of troups to fight the rebellious American colonies. Meanwhile the transparent motives behind the marriage, and the gross mismanagement of the family fortune have greatly alienated Barry from the affections of Lady Lyndon's son from her previous marriage -- Lord Bullingdon. Bullingdon is a brash, aggressively outspoken young man whose hostility towards Barry Lyndon seems as much motivated by a deeply rooted contempt for "the lowness of his birth" as by a genuine and understandable devotion towards, and apprehension about, Lady Lyndon. Bullingdon and his stepfather quarrel regularly and the outcome is occasionally a severe physical beating for the younger man -- sometimes in public. One such beating prompts Bullingdon to leave the household. It is the perceived mistreatment of Lord Bullingdon, abetted perhaps by the financial and marital scandals, that brings down upon Barry a coldness and resentment from the very people to whom he has so desperately tried to ingratiate himself. His ultimate fall from grace is dramatically and tragically prefaced by the death of young Bryan -- to whom he had been genuinely devoted, and in whom the hopes of 'Redmond Barry' and his mother had been wantonly vested. Shunned by society, grief-stricken over Bryan, and plagued by debts, Barry turns to drink, leaving his mother to run the affairs of the Lyndon household.

In the meantime, Lady Lyndon -- whose character is neither well defined nor well developed in the film -- is herself driven to despair and attempts suicide. The news of this prompts the return of Lord Bullingdon who, upon confronting his step-father, challenges him to the climactic duel that is the highlight of the film. In the nave of an abandoned church, amidst scores of cooing doves, Bullingdon -- who has been fearful to the point of vomiting -- misfires his pistol without even aiming at his protagonist. Nonetheless, it is now Barry Lyndon's turn, and he is in a position to kill his sworn enemy. In what is, perhaps, the most altruistic act in the entire film, he deliberately fires his pistol shot into the ground. For a moment, it appears that the duel is over. Then, incredibly, Bullingdon announces that he has not "received satisfaction," and insists upon taking his turn. Barry is seriously wounded in the leg, and the leg is eventually amputated. Bullingdon consolodates his victory by having Barry and his mother thrown out of the Lyndon household. With a small payoff that is conditional upon his departure from England, Barry Lyndon is destined to finish his life "poor, lonely, and childless." In the final scene of the film, Lady Lyndon is shown routinely settling some household accounts under the watchful eyes of Bullingdon, her household stewart, and her chaplain -- the latter two having played a considerable part in the undoing of her estranged husband. She comes upon a cheque payable to

Barry Lyndon, pauses briefly, and signs it. The date of the cheque, as Penelope Houston has reminded us in Sight and Sound, is 1789"... the end, in effect of the 18th century. Kubrick doesn't let the scene go quickly: he holds on to that tight little group, held in the act of paying off the past and protecting the future." The film closes with a quotation from the novel, in which Thackeray assures us of his characters that, "good or bad, handsome or ugly, rich or poor, they are all equal now ..."7

Barry Lyndon is an excellent example of a film for which a plot outline is singularly inadequate. Indeed, the most striking aspect of the film is its visual style, and the way the visuals function in harmony with, or in counterpoint to, the dialogue -- especially that spoken by an off-screen narrator who advances the plot and draws appropriate "morals" in roughly equal measure. The film is constructed of exquisite, beautifully composed pictures that bear a remarkable likeness to paintings of the period -- not just in tone, texture, and subject matter, but in their formality and stillness. Shots are held for a very long time, and cutting is minimal, so that the effect at times is that of watching a film as it might have been made by an aggregation of 18th century painters lead by Gainsborough. This style itself has been a matter of some controversy. Pauline Kael, for one, described the film as:

> cool pastel landscapes with small figures in the foreground, a stately tour of European high life in the mid-eighteenth century. The images are fastidiously delicate in the inexpressive, peculiarly chilly manner of the English painters of the period, and the film is breathtaking at first as we wait to see what will develop inside the pastoral loveliness.

What happens, according to Kael, is nothing: "It's a coffee-table movie; we might as well be at a three-hour slide show for art-history majors."

Others, notably Penelope Houston, have more sensibly discussed the visual style of the film in relation to the meaning Kubrick wishes to communicate:

> The camera style... establishes its own feeling of impersonal authority, pulling back time and again from detail to find distance and context, putting everything in its place, as though in the hands of an 18th century rationalist.... The technique, which is very deliberate indeed, puts people into a passive relationship with time and chance -- snatched away from Barry is the illusion...that he's in control.
>
> . . . .
>
> The second half of the film leaves movement and the rake's progress behind; the landscape is grandly spacious, but within it the characters seem increasingly isolated and frozen.

The elements Houston emphasizes -- everything in its place, passive relationships, isolated, "frozen" individuals -- seem absolutely crucial to Kubrick's meaning and vision.

In no small measure, Barry Lyndon is about the intransigencies of a social order and its corrupt, destructive impact upon an individual who is at various times its helpless pawn, enthusiastic agent, and unwitting martyr. The tragedy of the title character would be illustrated only superficially by cataloging his moral failings; the central fact of his life is that the social order wich determines his aspirations -- which would grant him a fuller humanity if he attained the status of gentleman or the rank of a peer -- also ensures that those same aspirations will never be realized. In a sense, he has been duped into reaching for the unattainable; and he squanders a fortune pursuing a goal that will forever be denied an "insolent Irish upstart" (Lord Bullingdon's words).

Further, he has been deluded into believing that in seeking to reach a higher social plane, he can safely ape the morality -- and immorality -- of his "betters." What he does not appreciate, and what renders his position so precarious, is this: the external facade of morality and behavior is not always as important as the unspoken, more primitive ethics lurking beneath it. In particular, his own behavior is evaluated according to a different standard than that applied to others: Lord Bullingdon's perversity during the climactic duel, for example, is an act of malevolence unparalleled in the film -- but the young Viscount is apparently able to carry on socially unscathed; this is in marked contrast to the ostracizing of Barry Lyndon after his assault on Bullingdon. Similarly, Barry's unfaithfulness is made to seem scandalous and callous (which it is) -- but Lady Lyndon had been an adultress herself prior to the death of her first husband, Sir Charles. "As men serve me, I serve them," says Barry Lyndon, but this simple principle of reciprocity is hoplessly out of step in a world in which the status of the server is a crucial element in the evaluation of his behavior.

Kubrick is right to close the film -- morbidly, perhaps -- with a reminder of the ultimate equality in death which the protagonists come to attain. But he seems to have more in mind than a reflection on social inequality. His is a vision too of the nature of man, and it is not a comforting one. What is most pessimistic about the film is the nagging suspicion that the perversities of the characters are not entirely determined by the social order -- that the social order itself may be inevitable if Kubrick is correct in his dreary, discouraging conception of human nature. There is virtually no one in the film who is unambiguously likeable -- with the possible exception of Bryan, who is killed. Barry Lyndon himself of course, is hardly admirable -- though he is as much a pitiable overreacher as insensitive social climber. (It is a curious fact, incidentally, that hardly anyone in the film -- including and especially the title character -- seems to be genuinely happy at any point.) Let us remember too that Barry's social aspirations are centainly not egalitarian. This is no "salt-of-the-earth" common man whose successes might elicit our unqualified approval; on the contrary, his belief in his own superior destiny is equalled by his undisguised contempt for the lower classes. He attains some measure of sympathy not so much because of his own stirling qualities, but because the people he would cheat, assault, flatter, or buy are no better than he, and in some respects they are worse. The pessimism that runs throughout the film is very much abetted and climaxed when Barry Lyndon's most nobel gesture -- sparing Bullingdon -- results in his physical mutilation and final relegation to the ranks from whence he came. Once again he has misread the real "rules of the game" to which the well bred strata subscribe; Lord Bullingdon, of course, suffers no such handicap.

It is interesting to note also that there is a certain discontinuity between the Barry Lyndon we actually see in the film, and the Barry Lyndon we are told about by the narrator. This has been pointed out by a number of observers, and was particularly well stated in Richard Combs' Monthly Film Bulletin review:

> Since the story-telling functions have also largely been consigned to this commentator -- in the sense that we are told about many more of Barry's adventures, and the way his character is shaped by them, than we ever actually see -- the effect (at least for the first part) is to render Barry the passive recipient of both his morality and his history....Kubrick's visual grandiloquence interlocks with the century's romantic cruelty as tightly as it did with the savage militarism of Paths of Glory: ...the romantic idealist Barry Lyndon is at first the former's passive victim and then its active representative....Barry begins his journey as a helpless innocent, fumbling through his first experiences of love and battle in a sentimental education that is also a kind of processing. The odd disconnection between the 'disreputable' Barry we are constantly being told about... and the misty-eyed, painfully unformed misfit we see, attests to both the success and failure of that processing.

The "disconnection" Combs refers to has been discussed at some length by others, including Ms. Houston (Sight and Sound), Jonathan Rosenbaum (Film Comment) and Michael Dempsey (Film Quarterly).

Finally, we would not wish to give the impression that interpretations of Kubrick's film have been identical, although the degree of consensus among those who liked the film has been substantial. In addition to the works we have cited in detail, Hans Feldman's Film Quarterly review article has much to commend it. Feldman talks about Barry Lyndon in relation to the entire body of Kubrick's work. Using Freud's Civilization and Its Discontents as a starting point, Feldman discusses the film in terms of the "forms" of civilization -- represented, of course, by the frozen, painterly compositions -- and the "savage nature of man" repressed by those forms. He quotes two significant statements by Kubrick: "Any attempt to create social institutions on a false view of the nature of man is probably doomed to failure." And elsewhere: "[Man is] an ignoble savage. He is irrational, brutal, weak, silly and unable to be objective about anything where his own interests are involved -- that about sums it up."

The Man Who Would Be King, the last of the three historical dramas, is an interesting companion piece to Barry Lyndon: both films were made by American directors working abroad, and both films are, in an important sense, about overreachers. The Man Who Would Be King, directed by John Huston, is based on a short story by Rudyard Kipling adapted and considerably "fleshed out" in a screenplay by Huston and Gladys Hill.[8] The setting of the film is India in the 1880's.

Kipling (Christopher Plummer) is working in his newspaper office late at night in the sweltering heat, when a rag-clad figure moves out of the darkness and begs for a drink. Kipling, to his astonishment, discovers that the pitiful creature is none other than Peachy Carnehan (Michael Caine) who, with his friend Daniel Dravot (Sean Connery), had set out on a remarkable adventure "three summers and a thousand years ago." Now, clutching his whiskey glass between his two bandaged hands, Peachy relates his and Danny's story. Except for the concluding sequence, the rest of the film is in flashback form.

Peachy had first encountered Kipling at a train station and had surreptitiously stolen the latter's pocket watch. When he realizes from a Masonic emblem affixed to the watch that Kipling is a brother Mason, Peachy returns the watch -- blaming the theft on an innocent native -- and cajols Kipling into delivering a message to Danny Dravot. In the process, Peachy tells Kipling about plans he and Danny have made to blackmail a state Rajah; and Kipling, partly because he fears for the safety of the two men, alerts British authorities to this. The blackmail conspiracy being only one of a number of disreputable schemes the two had concocted since leaving the army (they had been sergeants), they are deemed "political undesirables and detriments to the dignity of the Empire" and threatened with deportation to England. After the Imperial glories of their army days, they are resolved not to go home, where they would likely be employed as porters, so they go to Kipling's office and reveal to him a new, outrageous idea: "We are not little men, so we are going away to be kings." A bemused, incredulous Kipling reluctantly witnesses a contract in which Danny and Peachy set out the terms of their proposed regal partnership: among other things, they agree to renounce women and alcohol, at least until their goal is attained.

Peachy and Danny have decided to journey to an obscure northern region of the continent -- to Kafiristan (now Afghanistan), which Peachy describes as a place of warring tribes and "a land of opportunity for such as we." They will arbitrarily throw their weight behind one or another of the tribes, defeat the others, and eventually unite them into a single kingom. To avoid trouble en route to Kafiristan, they assume disguises -- Danny as a mad priest, and Peachy as his servant -- and keep well hidden the 20 rifles which are to assist them in the establishment of their kingdom. By now, Kipling has come to like the two schemers, though he remains rather appalled by their antics; and prior to the departure of the "mad priest and servant," he bestows upon Danny a good luck token -- the Masonic emblem which had been affixed to his watch.

The journey to Kafiristan is long and treacherous, but the success of the two adventurers seems pre-ordained. This is most vividly underlined during a sequence in which Peachy and Danny are trapped on a cold, snowy mountain ledge, unable to advance or retreat due to the collapse of a bridge of ice and snow that had spanned a deep crevasse. For a time, they keep themselves warm by burning several eerie wooden icons -- icons which, they surmise, are the intended likenesses of local "Gods" and meant to scare away intruders. When the last of the wooden Gods has been burned, Peachy and Danny are resigned to death; but as they fondly recall past glories, reflect upon their friendship, and contemplate what might have been, their laughter triggers a snowslide which fills the crevasse and opens the door to Kafiristan.

Upon reaching their destination, Peachy and Danny immediately set about putting their plan into action. Their first encounter with one of the local tribes occurs after they spontaneously and arbitrarily assist the natives by scaring off a raiding party from a rival tribe. The two Englishmen promise to deliver the local chieftain from his enemies -- the chief being a fierce-looking but (it turns out) cowardly fellow who wants to be known as "Uta the Terrible" -- and proceed to train the tribesmen in the more civilized methods of warfare. "When we've done with you," says Danny, "you'll be able to stand up and slaughter your enemies like civilized men." He also mockingly cautions them against thinking too much: "Obey orders. Don't think. Do you think anyone would go into battle for King and country if he thought about it? Not bloody likely!" Meanwhile, he and Peachy familiarize themselves with local customs, one of which is a variation on the game of polo using a severed human head as the object of contention. (This is a fate that awaits Uta, after some of his rivals are incorporated into the kingdom.) The two intruders are aided and abetted in their schemes by a Ghurka named "Billy Fish," the sole survivor of an earlier geographical expedition, who becomes devoted to them and is taken into their confidence.

The conquest of Kafiristan is greatly accelerated when, during a cavalry charge, Danny is struck by an arrow which appears to have no effect on him -- in fact, it had lodged harmlessly in his bandolier. The tribesmen conclude that he is a God, and Peachy, Danny, and Billy Fish go along with this idea, reasoning that a God can conquer Kafiristan in half the time it would take a king. Danny rather haltingly grows accustomed to his new status, though it appears his reign may be at an end when he and the others are mysteriously summoned before the priests at the holy city of Sikandergul. There, the high priest is determined to put Danny's divinity to the test: an archer will shoot at very close range to replicate the event on which Danny's reputation rests. His arms are held and his clothes are ripped asunder, and then -- much to his astonishment and relief -- the priests and their followers fall prostrate before him. Kipling's Masonic token is recognized as the emblem of "Sikander" -- Alexander the Great, who had visited Kafiristan in 328 B.C. -- and Danny is now worshipped as the long-awaited divine son of Sikander. Not only is Kafiristan his, but he and Peachy are shown a roomful of treasures that, in Peachy's words, "make the jewels in the Tower of London look like cheap family heirlooms." Moreover, they are free to take the jewels wherever they want to, since the jewels properly belong to the son of Sikander. Their wildest dreams have come true.

Because of monsoons, the departure must be delayed for four months. During this period, Danny makes the most of his kingship and bestowed divinity -- building bridges, organising an army, dispensing justice, and generally behaving in the manner of a benevolent dictator. He comes to enjoy his role, and goes so far as to quietly ask Peachy to bow before him "for appearance's sake." Inevitably, Danny decides to stay in Kafiristan: there are more bridges and roads to be built, and he dreams of a flag, a nation, and standing before the Queen of England, not as a subject but as a brother monarch. The ultimate conceit in which he indulges himself is his belief that Kafiristan needs him and that he must have successors. For his part, Peachy wants Danny to let his subjects "go back to playing polo with one another's heads." He has never raised his sights beyond looting the country, which is what they had originally intended. "We've had this rare streak of luck," he says to Danny. And Danny replies: "You call it luck, but I call it destiny." Therein lies the crucial and fatal difference between them.

Matters begin to turn sour when Danny insists that he will take a Queen -- despite the objections of the priests, and the prospective bride's belief that she will be consumed with fire should she embrace a God. Crop failures, and other natural catastrophes reinforce those religious convictions, but Danny, notwithstanding Peachy's exhortations, won't be dissuaded. Peachy finall resigns himself to Danny's intransigence, and plans to leave with his share of the treasure following the royal wedding. But Danny's wedding is the occasion of his unmasking: his terrified bride-to-be bites him as he tries to embrace her -- and the blood she draws proves that Danny is not a God, but a man. It is clear now that Danny, Peachy and Billy Fish will be lucky to leave Kafiristan alive. Determined to "brass it out," they march briskly through the assembled throngs, protected for the moment by the quickly fading aura of Danny's "divinity." Presently, however, they find themselves surrounded and without ammunition. Billy Fish wades into the crowd with his sword flailing, and is killed almost immediately. On the verge of certain death, Danny asks Peachy to forgive him for his high-handedness and folly; Peachy forgives him fully. Danny is now herded onto a rope suspension bridge spanning a deep gorge. While the angry, disillusioned mob hacks at the ropes, Danny stands erect, his head still crowned, and in a loud clear voice begins singing "The Ministrel Boy." Peachy, now restrained by his captors, joins in. At last, Daniel Dravot, the man who would be King, begins his long, slow descent.

In the final sequence, Peachy explains his own fate to Kipling: he had been crucified between two pine trees. When he didn't die, the priests deemed it a miracle and let him go. His friend Danny, he tells us, was with him all the way during his year-long journey home. He held onto Danny's hand, he tells Kipling, and he held onto Danny's head. Finally, he places upon Kipling's desk the decayed head of Daniel Dravot; and on that head rests Danny's untarnished gold crown.

The Man Who Would Be King is a first-rate instance of a film which harmonizes and interrelates all the elements of an exciting, exotic adventure story and all the elements of a deeper, more profound sensibility. There is no sequence in the film that does not serve to advance the story in a simple, unobtrusive fashion -- and yet, the film reverberates symbolic meaning in a way that is not always subtle, yet never too ostentatious. The journey to Kafiristan is a particularly good example: on the one hand, the sequences are a straightforward contribution to the narrative -- two men are going from point 'A' to point 'B' and must overcome tremendous physical obstacles to do so; with considerable luck they make it. But it is also the case that the journey to Kafiristan foreshadows events later in the film and enlarges upon its overall meaning: the "mad priest" dancing on the summit of a hill as the sun sets behind him; the long shots -- too easily dismissed as merely scenic -- in which Peachy and Danny are engulfed by the landscape; the burned gods, broken bridges, and fateful deliverance from death -- all reinforce and amplify a sense of physical, spiritual, and social isolation, of uncontrollable external forces manipulating lives, of the violation of an alien culture, and blasphemy.

One of the quite explicit political implications of the film is Huston's treatment of the delusions of power. For Huston, power is not so much corrupting as intoxicating -- it robs men of a perspective on themselves and the events they wish to manipulate. Danny grows so accustomed to, and so fond of, his royal/divine role that he becomes dangerously insulated from reality -- like a politician reading his own press releases and swallowing them whole. The trappings of royalty fit so comfortably, and its prerogatives are exercised with such ease (and, it should be said, not entirely foolishly), that Danny loses sight of who he really is and fails to set limits to his original, albeit hardly laudable, ambitions. A confidence man, loafer, and scoundrel, he begins to take an interest in his place in history! He has fallen victim to what Huston in a Film Comment interview called folie de grandeur, an affliction which sets him very much apart from Peachy Carnehan:

> The two men in this picture are indeed one man, and it's a dialogue that one man has with himself. They are divided into two men, because it cannot be all that introspective, in film. When the story calls for them to be divided, it's kind of a division of a single personality, and when they come together again, the individual is united. One half of "him," as one half of ourselves very often does, falls prey to that illness that attacks us when we get to high places, folie de grandeur. Imagining that we are more than we are. Gods, in fact. The other one is that half of ourselves that chides us and says that we are absurd.

Interestingly, Huston underscores this unity-separation-unity structure in his manipulation of dialogue: during the initial sequences, Peachy and Danny deliver several speeches -- to Kipling, to the British official before whom they're summoned, and to the Kafiri chiefs -- with each speaking alternate lines in rapid succession, creating the impression of a single intellect rather than two independent minds. That pattern is broken during the middle of the film when they can no longer anticipate one another's thoughts. It is re-established towards the end, when they are _simultaneously_ singing "The Ministrel Boy."

A related aspect of Danny's folly -- and perhaps it goes hand in hand with _folie de grandeur_ -- is his failure to recognize the _limits_ of his power. He is dangerously alone in his conviction that he can marry in defiance of the tribal religious prohibition -- even Peachy, who is notably more contemptuous of the people they are exploiting, has a healthy respect for what is and is not possible. Danny has conquered Kafiristan, but he does not comprehend the nature of his kingdom, not least of all its inviolate customs and taboos. It never seems to occur to him that he is tampering with beliefs and values that are as tenaciously held -- at the very least -- as his own convictions about his destiny. Tom Milne, in the _Monthly Film Bulletin_, has made a similar point:

> ... Dravot and Carnehan, seeing nothing of India itself as they pursue their grandiose plan, are behaving as typical

> imperialists. They bring order, justice, progress and even humanity to Kafiristan (no more polo with enemy heads), but at the price of quick retribution for anyone who disagrees and always from a standpoint of moral, racial and hygienic superiority. And they duly fail in the end because they forfeit their divine authority; but an even greater failure, generating the first, is their inability to recognize the force and validity of alien cultures, however primitive.

It will be apparent here that Milne has indulged in an unfortunate tendency evident in several other critiques of Huston's film -- a tendency to treat Peachy and Danny as completely undifferentiated characters, rather than as separate individuals or, as Huston would have it, as different aspects of a single personality. ("They" don't "forfeit their divine authority," since only Danny is ever accorded that status.) Peachy, as Pauline Kael has stated, is "the smarter of the two, the wise-guy realist, loyal to Danny even when he's depressed by Danny's believing himself a man of destiny...." Nonetheless, Peachy's realistic, down-to-earth perspective -- we've had a streak of luck, now let's take the treasure and run -- is rather less appealing and more mundane than Danny's bold, pathetic flourishs.

Finally, but without exhausting the wealth of connotations in the film, it should be noted that our responses to Danny and Peachy are not univocal. It is a measure of Huston's talent, of course, that we can recognize them as racists, warmongers, thieves and opportunists -- and yet realize, as Kael has done, that they "represent courage and gallantry" -- that their commitment to the Masonic myth of a "universal brotherhood under God" has some endearing substance, at least in their relationship with one another, though they violate it shamelessly in their dealings with others. What we see is courage and brutality, generosity and greed, racism and brotherhood in one complex, unholy mix -- the innocence and exhuberance of boys, the corruption and cynicism of men. The spirit of the film and the mark of its achievement were most succinctly stated by Brendan Gill in Film Comment, in his two-word assessment of Daniel Dravot's death scene: "Preposterous; unforgettable."

Parables

While the asylum movies and the four futuristic and historical films are of substantial political interest in terms of the standards we have set, it seems likely that none of them would be recognized as political either by a casual filmgoer, or by those whose idea of politics is narrower than ours. It is highly probable, however, that general audiences as well as those interested in a more limited notion of political cinema would recognize the following two films as political works: Special Section and Swept Away By and Unusual Destiny in the Blue Sea of August (also referred to as Swept Away ...). The former is a film by Constantine Costa-Gavras, whose reputation was built upon political melodramas such as Z and State of Siege; and the latter is by Lina Wertmuller, whose reputation was more recently established, with films such as The Seduction of Mimi, Love and Anarchy, and Seven Beauties.

Special Section was written by Costa-Gavras and Jorge Semprum from a book by Herve Villere, and is set in France during the Vichy regime of Marshal Petain. In the opening sequence, audience applause at the conclusion of an opera is interrupted by a radio announcement emanating from the house speakers. The voice of Marshal Petain first deplores "disorderly conduct" throughout the country, and then warns that "unless we change our political structure, France will fall into the same abyss...as Spain." The announced changes in the political structure include the abolition of political parties and -- more significantly, given what is to follow -- an ominous modification to the judicial system: "political justice" will now be the responsibility of the Minister of the Interior, as distinct from the aging Minister of Justice; this is to the apparent delight of the former, and to the surprise and chagrin of the latter. The Minister of the Interior, a stout and not very sinister-looking industrialist (played by Michel Lonsdale, the heroic policeman of The Day of the Jackal), is said to have gotten industry to "shape up" and is now expected to perform a similar feat with the country at large.

Elsewhere in France, Communist partisans have concluded that Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union has changed the nature of the war: what was previously considered a struggle among imperialist powers is now seen as an anti-Fascist crusade. A strategy is devised that includes terrorist action against the occupation army, although some serious reservations are expressed about the likelihood of working class victims. The first assassination victim is a young German naval officer who is shot in the back at point blank range. The Minister of the Interior deems it a political killing, and therefore within his jurisdiction, and he resolves to react quickly and severely, purportedly in the interests of forestalling a deadlier response by the Germans themselves. Since there is no hope that the real assisins will be caught, the Minister decides upon the following plan: the government will pass a new anti-terrorism law which, among other things, will provide the death penalty for certain heretofore lesser offenses; the law will apply retroactively and will be administered by a new "Special Section" of the Court of

Appeal, which will try, convict, and sentence to death six "Communists, anarchists and Jews" who are already serving jail terms for offences that are soon to become capital crimes.

The Minister's plan is unveiled before the Cabinet and quickly approved, notwithstanding the strenuous opposition of the Minister of Justice. Next, the German Military Command is approached and its approval of the retaliatory measures is solicited. In one of the more astonishing sequences in the film, the entire question is discussed by the French and the Germans largely from the point of view of political decorum. The occupation forces, it is explained, do not object to retroactive laws, but they are concerned about the "normalcy of these procedures." In particular, the Germans take exception to the French proposal for executions in public; this, they feel, would be barbarous and would be blamed on them, so they veto the idea. ("Those German generals are so *conservative*," one French official remarks after the meeting.) Apart from that, the strategy is approved, and those present casually turn their attention to more mundane details -- e.g., selecting a suitable date for the executions.

Once the plan has been accepted, it gradually assumes the dimensions of an administrative problem -- albeit a particularly thorny one. "We need six death sentences by next Thursday," is the way the problem is defined, and at times it is as if an urgent request for office furnishings were being filled. The retroactive law must be drafted, back-dated ten or fifteen days, and signed; appointments to the Special Section must be made; the victims must be selected, re-tried, convicted, sentenced and guillotined. Quite understandably, there is some opposition to these procedures, not least of all from the Minister of Justice, who must be persuaded to sign the new law and select personnel for the new court. One particularly important rationalization for going along with the executions -- and the one to wich the Minister of Justice finally succumbs -- is the belief that the absence of a convincing French response to the assassination, the Germans would react even more savagely. A point that recurs throughout the film is that the French were cowed -- and foolishly so -- by the psychology of rumor: initially, for example, it is rumored that if the French didn't act, the Germans would kill 50 hostages -- "not just anyone, important people"; later the number is said to be 100, including the Archbishop of Paris, who would be strangled to death; and by the time candidates are being selected for the court, the rumor is adaptable to particular circumstances -- e.g., a lawyer who balks at the idea of administering such a law is assured that lawyers in particular will be singled out if the Germans retaliate.

Notwithstanding the rumored reprisals, some of the proposed candidates for the Special Section are appalled that they should be considered for such an office, and reject it outright. But others are found who respond more favorably; their motives include fear, patriotism, and personal ambition -- and, of course, combinations of these. Thus, for example, an ambitious, patriotic veteran whose judicial or legal career has been faltering can easily be persuaded (or can persuade himself) that he is being "called up" again in the service of France. That view is reinforced by the politicians and bureaucrats themselves, who characteristically rationalize the entire abomination in terms of national security: i.e., France will maintain some facade of sovereignty; relations with the occupying power will be improved; and, rather unclearly, France's future in a new, united Europe will be secured.

The designation of personnel for the court is only one part of the selection process; the other is the selection of victims. Since the Minister of the Interior feels that Communists, Jews, and anarchists were likely responsible for the killing of the German officer, the nightmare logic of the situation dictates that two prisoners from each of those categories ought to be executed. If, as Jack Kroll has claimed in Newsweek, Special Section "is the story of a search for personnel, and its key dramatic unit is that most familiar of situations, the job interview," its most telling symbol may be the file folder. Ten file folders are selected from each of three file cabinets -- representing the three "offending" groups. From each stack of ten folders, four are selected for trial, making a total of 12 defendants; six will be guillotined, and, for the sake of appearances, six will receive lighter sentences. The selection is done after a cursory examination of the files; the arbitrariness of the procedure reaches a dramatic peak when we see the Minister holding a file folder in each hand in a gesture that suggests he may be weighing them or guaging their relative thickness -- a grotesque parody of "blind" justice, with a life literally hanging in the balance. The shot is held for an instant, before one of the folders is placed in the death stack.

The trials themselves constitute the least interesting aspect of the film. They are held in camera (despite the importance that had been placed on maintaining the appearances and forms of justice and legality), and the victims are mostly manual workers who -- far from being the "terrorists" against whom the elaborate machinery was set in motion -- are serving sentences for ordinary petty crimes, or political offences such as distributing anti-Nazi leaflets and Communist posters. The victims are also portrayed in happier times, in a series of idyllic flashbacks that tug too sentimentally at the heartstrings. One of the designated condemned men is a journalist who functions as their spokesman and as the conscience of the film. His stirring speech to the court -- that the people of France would be the judges one day -- proves sufficiently unnerving that the prosecutor and some of the judges begin wondering "who'll rule France if Germany falls?" Fearful that the journalist's martyrdom would provoke an inordinate public outcry, the court votes by a norrow margin to spare him as well as one of the other prisoners. For the other four who had been designated for execution, there is no hope, despite appeals to Marshal Petain. Shots of a guillotine being assembled tell of their fate. Notwithstanding the journalist's prophecy and the apprehensions of some of the perpetrators, the film's epilogue explains that no action was taken against any of the judges of the Special Section following the liberation -- for a "raison d'etat." Moreover, other Special Sections were formed; and those prisoners who had not been condemned to death in the dramatized portion of the movie either died in concentration camps or were executed later.

Special Section is an interesting, imperfect political film that is strong on details of plot, but weak on characterization; and that weakness, unfortunately, renders the events described less comprehensible than they might otherwise be. The outrageous event that the film documents -- and Costa-Gavras's films always have an aura of documentary about them -- has overt political interest that will be painfully evident from the summary above. It should be noted, however, that not everyone was satisfied that Costa-Gavras and his screenwriter stated the facts of the situation accurately. Pauline Kael, for one, took issue with their decision to

> shape the story to make it appear that the French were merely fantasizing the danger of large-scale reprisals. There's no possibility of examining the psychology of collaboration and resistance if the French officials are obviously fools, cowards, and climbers....Some historians say that the Germans did in fact want to take a hundred lives for the one, and gave orders for fifty hostages to be executed immediately, and that the French bargained the number down to six.

In effect, says Kael, the film cartoons the collaborators; she asks pointedly: "After we've seen The Sorrow and the Pity, with actual collaborators discussing what they did and why, and seen the fears, moral confusions, and stresses they cuccumbed to, how can we have any respect for this simplistic vulgarization of history?"

As implied in Kael's remarks, Costa-Gavras goes to great lengths to undermine the "fear of reprisals" rationale, and at times he even ridicules it. During the key meeting between the French and the Germans, when the hasty French initiative is discussed and approved, there is no mention of fifty-hostage or hundred-hostage alternatives; the burden of blame and responsibility for what is to follow is clearly and, at that point in the film, surprisingly laid upon the shoulders of the French officials. For that reason, and because of the way some of the rumor-mongering characters are depicted, subsequent references to the possibility of German reprisals seem stupid, gullible, or foolish. In minimizing the German threat, Costa-Gavras emphasizes other aspects of the collaborators' motivations as explanations for their behavior; but what we get are stereotypes: on the one hand, venal, ambitious politicians rationalizing decisions in terms of national security, aided and abetted by a compliant civil service; and on the other hand, shamelessly sentimentalized working class victims and a courageous, idealistic journalist. ("This movie does not put even one scummy person among them to test your sympathies," wrote Kael; and Newsweek's Jack Kroll, who wrote a very favorable review of the film, called the defendants "corny travesties of Sacco and Vanzetti.") Since the film is about the state conspiring against its citizens (Watergate implications were duly noted by most reviewers),[9] it comes as no surprise, of course, that our impressions are dominated by disturbing images of state agents and sympathetic images of the innocent victims. But the film would be a great deal better if it conveyed a stronger impression of characters who did _not_ fit the stereotypes -- in particular, a stronger impression of those who would _not_ serve on the new court.

The strength of the film lies less in its inadequate characterization and sensational subject matter than in its depiction of bureaucratic processes. The point Costa-Gavras seems to be making is not the facile one, that the bureaucracy is inherently dehumanizing, but the more subtle one, that bureaucratic processes facilitate inhumane decision making. The most memorable scenes in _Special Section_ are those in which file folders are selected, shuffled, sorted, stacked and casually examined. One senses at times that the barbarity can be perpetrated because its subject matter-- the six men designated for execution, as well as the others -- can be reduced to the disembodied state of manila folders: men who might not be capable of killing a flesh and blood individual _can_ move paper from one corner of a desk to the other and accomplish the same thing. Costa-Gavras also implies that once the machinery is set in motion, moral questions give way to procedural imperatives: i.e., the question of whether it is right or wrong gives way to, "Can it be done, and can it be done by next Thursday?" It may not be right, but it can be made lawful. The hitch, of course, is that everyone knows that the folders represent "cases," which in turn represent living, breathing individuals; that problem can be overcome by means of linguistic subterfuge: the victims are frequently, and quite inappropriately, referred to as "terrorists," which, of course, makes them dispensable. At the best, then, Special Section suggests that the great moral questions are not always perceived as such: acquiescence to the murder of six innocent men becomes routine compliance with a superior's request to co-operate in the lawful executions of six terrorists -- all for reasons of state.

The opening sequences of Lina Wertmuller's film, Swept Away..., take place on board a pleasure yacht crusing the Mediterranean off the coast of Italy. Raffaella, a wealthy, attractive-looking and shrewish woman, is involved in a loud argument with the other vacationers -- all rich and complacent -- about a host of political questions: Communism-versus-capitalism, ecology, abortion and so on. The essence of Raffaella's politics is anti-Communism -- stridently overstated, and irritatingly insensitive both to the opinions of the others (some of whom accuse her of being a fascist), and to the conditions under which her poorer countrymen live. Raffaella's political diatribe is intermingled with sporadic personal jibes at the expense of Gennarino, a poor deck-hand from the south of Italy who is a committed Communist and barely capable of controlling his hostility towards Raffaella. Gennarino's temper is aggravated by Raffaella's constant demands and complaints, and he appears to feel especially persecuted when she draws attention to the odor coming from his shirt. Presently after some of the others leave the yacht to go swimming in a grotto, Raffaella orders Gennarino to launch a rubber dinghy and take her to them. When the boat's motor fails, the two of them are cast adrift (or swept away) and eventually wind up on a desert island.

Rafaella is initially insensitive to the implications of their new, primitive social situation, and she continues to treat Gennarino with undiluted contempt. Appallingly, from her perspective, he begins to respond in kind. Thus, when she calls him a "crappy sub-proletarian," he answers with a string of insults ending with: "You're a pig, and -- what's worse -- a Social Democrat." When she scoffs at his southern origins, and suggests that the physical appearances of southern women would be vastly improved by dieting, his response is: "A lot of them are forced into dieting. It's called poverty." And Gennarino's assertiveness in the new situation is not limited to verbal repartee: he realizes quickly that his ability to catch fish, lobsters, and rabbits, for example, is immeasurably more valuable than wealth based on an industrial economy, which is the only wealth Raffaella has. She is disdainful of his skills at first, and noisely disgusted by the raw fish he offers her while they are still adrift in the boat. Later, on the island, when he skins and impales a rabbit for roasting, she is -- as Penelope Gilliat has written -- "still enough of a born overlord to despise the naked sight of the food she regularly respects when it is clothed in sauce." For a time, they forage independently of one another, but she has no success. Hunger gets the better of contempt, and she asks for food, but he won't give her any. She complains that there ought to be a law against people letting other people go hungry. "If there was such a law," he explains, "they could put all the wealthy people in the world in jail. But there isn't, so all you see in jail are poor people." She offers to buy food from him, and he tells her, with some satisfaction, "money's no good here. If you want to eat, you have to work for it." Inevitably, she is forced to give in; her subjugation begins, significantly enough, with the washing of his pants.

Though she submits, of necessity, to a reversal of the master-servant relationship, Raffaella has more difficulty curbing her abrasive tongue. Gennarino, for his part, continues to regard her as utterly representative of her class and the source of every evil inflicted upon the working class; he seethes with rage at the very thought of her status. Raffaellas's provocations and Gennarino's angry obsession with class differences -- which he does not altogether differentiate from sex differences -- lead to an escalation of their conflict to the level of physical brutality. In one particularly violent scene, he slaps her face repeatedly in unison with a furious litany of grievances against capitalism in general, and this "ugly Social Democrat whore" in particular: "_That's_ for causing inflation and not paying taxes... _That's_ for the sales tax.... _That's_ for the hospitals where the poor can't even get in..." And so on. The final subjugation of Rafaella is sexual and emotional. "You're finally going to know a real man," he tells her, in a prelude to rape. "You've never had one before." Ultimately -- and this has been an extremely controversial aspect of the film -- her hostility gives way to love, or some semblance thereof; but the relationship remains one of subservience: at various points, for example, she is forced to call him master, kiss his feet, beg for sex, and so on. She confesses to having been "swept away into a mad dream," and comes to regard him as "man as he existed in nature"; he falls in love too, and savors his role as master and teacher, though he is sporadically infuriated by any suggestions of her alleged class superiority.

Under Gennarino's tutelage, Raffaella grows to despise the world they have left -- it is, she says, a fake world, with rotten values" -- and speaks fondly of the two of them having been "reborn." But Gennarino insists that their relationship be put to what is, in the context of the film, the ultimate test: he wants to return to civilization to see if love will survive. When a rescue ship appears on the horizon, he overrules Raffaella's objections and signals it. Reunited with their respective spouses -- she is the wife of an industrialist, he has a wife and several children -- the social and physical distance between them is reaffirmed. With a modest reward that had been given to him by Raffaella's husband, Gennarino buys a topaz ring and sends it to her. Then, painfully aware that their return to civilization was a mistake, he telephones her and proposes that they go back to the island. She is hesitant, but appears halfheartedly willing. But the inevitable happens: while Gennarino sits on a pier waiting for her, a helicopter ascends, and Raffaella is "swept away" to the social stratum from whence she came. Realizing now that the affair is over, Gennarino resorts to a string of epithets: "I knew I never should have trusted a rich women....Dirty capitalist pig, deserting me like this." Finally, he walks back a ways to where his wife is waiting;

she is a plain sorry-looking woman, and we last see them walking together, fussing and bickering about their marriage.

At the most rudimentary and inadequate level of interpretation, Swept Away... is a simplistic story about the way class differences distort and destroy a genuine love that would flourish in a more "natural" setting. In that interpretation, Gennarino is presumed to be an unambiguously-portrayed working class hero who is trifled with and abandoned by a capitalist shrew; and the natural relationship between the sexes -- man's dominion over woman -- is destroyed because of the repressive and perverse nature of a class-structured society. Consider, for example, the Variety review of this film:

> Stripped of her social station she (Raffaella) is reduced to a primal object, humiliated at every turn until she accepts, body and soul, man's supremacy in the realm of nature.... Bliss is marred, after rescue. He (Gennarino) is hemmed in by wife and family. Raffaella, regretfully, returns to corporate duties and society is the culprit forming a barrier to anarchic paradise.

The difficulty with the Wertmuller[10] film, and the reason why some interpreters have tended to confuse the point being made, is this: Wertmuller has a single character represent values which, for liberal film critics, are dissonant: on the one hand he is a sympathetic, if sometimes foolish, spokesmen for workers as distinct from bosses, and our empathy is entirely and understandably with him; on the other hand, his treatment of Raffaella sometimes overwhelms the aforementioned prejudice and we cringe at the simple spectacle of a man brutalizing a woman. Thus, a character representing the venerable cause of socialism is also a violently dominating male chauvinist ("a woman is an object of pleasure -- a little relaxation after work"), and our responses are mixed. Wertmuller, a socialist, does not sentimentalize her working-class hero. Though she does caricature the bourgeois protagonist, Raffaella, here too we experience ambivalent feelings: on the one hand, no one seems more deserving of Gennarino's rage; and on the other hand, his treatment of her seems inordinately harsh. Only by ignoring the ambivalent reactions we experience during some of the island sequences -- or by presuming that a more univocal response was intended -- can the film be construed as a simplistic and preposterously retrograde notion of paradise. ("Uncorrupted by social forces," wrote Pauline Kael in a brief, negative discussion of the film "the couple live the 'true' relations of the sexes and find paradise.")

It is our view, then, that Wertmuller's depiction of Gennarino is intentionally equivocal. There is no question whatsoever, of course, as to where her sympathies lie, and consequently, where she expects our sympathies to be. But she clearly demonstrates the cruelty he is capable of, and the absurdities of some of the poses he strikes -- especially when his sometimes hilarious obsession with class differences manifests itself at the most unlikely times: "Sodomize me," Raffaella pleads at one point during their lovemaking; and Gennarino launches into a tirade about how she's "using big words to confuse me." Indeed, in some ways Gennarino emerges as less a triumphant working-class hero than a pathetically gullible, bombastic sentimentalist: unlike Raffaella, he is incapable of realizing that their return to civilization will be the end of the affair; unlike her, he is surprised and hurt when, as Diane Jacobs wrote in Film Comment, she "chooses the comforts of a loveless marriage over the penury and squalor that would reward a life with island master Gennarino...." But though our responses to Gennarino are mixed, the deck remains stacked in his favor. For one thing, he has too many good lines: his furious outbursts about the complacency and meanness of her class strike too many sympathetic chords, while her high-pitched retorts are merely grating. In no small measure, the sequences in which she is most tolerable are those in which she is being sexy, servile, or positively idolatrous -- as when she kisses his feet and adorns him with garlands. Though we credit her with the sense to realize the consequences of signaling the rescue ship, the decision to leave Gennarino remains hers, and his tragedy is undoubtedly the greater of the two.

Notwithstanding the controversy about the alleged sexist implications of the film, it must be remembered too that Raffaella is more clearly intended as a representative of her _class_ than as a representative of her _sex_. Prior to the beating alluded to above, for example, Gennarino informs her: "Now you're going to pay. You're going to pay for _everyone_." And his frequent insults invariably carry similar implications: i.e., she is not merely a "bitch" or an "ugly whore"; she is a "_capitalist_ bitch" and an "ugly _Social Democrat_ whore". Gennarino is constantly reminding himself, and us, of Rafaella's status, and in the context of the film he is absolutely right to do so: it is when he underestimates the importance of this difference -- when he begins to presume or to hope that love will transcend it -- that he appears most pathetic.

In the final analysis, Wertmuller seems to be telling us that, as Marjorie Rosen indicated in a _New Times_ feature, patterns of dominance and submission are ultimately a function of economics -- not that one pattern is more "natural" than the other. Thus, in industrial society, Gennarino and the class he represents are virtually enslaved by Raffaella and her ilk, because of the economic power that Gennarino raves about throughout the film. In the more primitive society of two, Gennarino is able to enslave Raffaella by virtue of his economic control -- manifested in his superior resourcefulness and survival skills. The latter manifestation, of course, is suggestive of a political point all on its own; i.e., that the rich are soft and live off the sweat of others, namely the working class, which performs the only labor that is of real value. It is sometimes a weakness, but more often a strength, of Wertmuller's film that her point about class dominance is made using imperfect, flesh and blood individuals as protagonists. One would not necessarily "get the point" without thinking about the film carefully, and in that sense it is less successful didactically than a film like Special Section or some of the message movies; the strength of Swept Away... is that it has enough subtlety and depth to make thinking about it a rewarding activity.

Street perspectives

The political explicitness of Special Section and Swept Away... gives way now to a different mode of political content -- that which manifests itself in several films set in the contemporary United States, and which, in varying degrees, gives those films an aura of serious, self-conscious reflection that transcends their not inconsiderable entertainment values. Three of those films (Hustle, Dog Day Afternoon, and Taxi Driver) are set in harsh urban environments and -- with moderate-to-considerable success-- try to dramatize a reality that is significantly less glamorous than the world of super-spies and super-cops that is more typically associated with the commercial cinema.

Hustle, directed by Robert Aldrich from a screenplay by Steve Shagan, stars Burt Reynolds as police lieutenant Phil Gains and Catherine Deneuve as Gaines' lover, Nicole. At its simplest level, the film is about an investigation into the death of a young woman, Gloria Hollinger, whose body is washed up on a beach during the opening sequences. Gaines and his partner, Louis Belgrave (Paul Winfield), are assigned to the case, and Gaines rather hastily concludes that the girl's death was a suicide from an overdose of barbiturates. Belgrave is less certain about the suicide verdict since the victim had been involved with Leo Sellers (Eddie Albert), a union lawyer of "known" corruption, and because the corpse showed signs of considerable, and not altogether ordinary, sexual activity. Belgrave is the tougher of the two in the early part of the film; at one point, for example, he participates in the beating of an albino suspect (in an unrelated case), which prompts an outburst from Gaines about the importance of compassion. Despite Belgrave's feelings that they should dig deeper into the Hollinger affair, the case is momentarily closed by their superior, John Santoro, after he has satisfied himself that nothing important is at stake. "The girl's father -- is he anyone?" Santoro asks Gaines. And Gaines replies sadly, "No, John. He's no one."

Gaines' reluctance to pursue the Hollinger case does not stem from personal corruption. Instead, he appears to have an aversion to the sordid possibilities of the story, and is, at any rate, rather morose and distracted by personal matters. He had left his wife after finding her in bed with another man, and is now living with -- and in love with -- a high priced call girl, Nicole. Though they talk wistfully of going away together to Rome, he seems incapable of making a permanent commitment to her, so she continues her professional life, even to the point of making and receiving "business" calls in his presence. Besides this, Gaines is filled with an aching sense of nostalgia for the past. At one point he affirms his love for "old bands, old songs, old ballplayers, old soldiers," and that is a satisfactory summary of the mood conveyed in much of the film. It is a past that is sentimentalized, and Gaines remembers it with a feeling of regret bordering on self-pity. As a police officer, Gaines is cynical and compassionate, and capable of lethal efficiency -- but he is typically plunged into danger rather than looking for it and confronting it on his own terms.

The Hollinger case will be no exception. Marty

Hollinger (Ben Johnson) refuses to believe that his daughter committed suicide, notwithstanding Gaines' limp statistical evidence showing the likelihood of such an outcome ("Suicide is the number one killer of teenagers in America today"). A bitter, disillusioned man even before the tragedy, Hollinger is angered by what he feels to be police indifference, which he attributes to his own unimportance and to the fact that he does not have an expensive lawyer. "Nobody cares," Hollinger says dejectedly. "Sometimes," says a sympathetic Gaines, "we don't have *time* to care." But Hollinger himself does have time, so he pursues the investigation on his own, while Gaines and Belgrave deal with more pressing matters such as rescuing hostages from a derranged gunman, and trailing suspected Arab terrorists; the latter subplot is arbitrarily introduced and inexplicably terminated without resolution. (It should be noted here that *Hustle* is the kind of police film in which one can expect a detective to routinely deal with an armed robbery on his *way* **to** work and heaven knows what else once he gets there.)

During the course of his investigation, Hollinger gets brutally beaten up, but not before he discovers that Gloria had been to a "sex party" the night before she died; the party had been at the mansion of a man named Leo, an obvious reference to the corrupt union lawyer, Leo Sellers, in whom Gaines and Belgrave have a renewed interest: three union executives have been murdered, purportedly on Sellers' orders. The whys and wherefores of the killings are never articulated in the film, except for ominous references to their "political" nature; it appears certain, however, that Sellers is guilty, though there is not enough evidence to bring him to trial. Increasingly sympathetic towards Hollinger, and understanding his grief and cynicism, Gaines agrees to "find out everything there is to know" about Gloria's death, provided that Hollinger stays out of it. Gaines and Belgrave question Leo Sellers and find that Gloria had been making pornographic movies, that Sellers had seen one of her films and had invited her to an orgy, and that later she had indeed committed suicide. Sellers is openly contemptuous of their concern for Hollinger, and reiterates the question Gaines' superior had asked earlier: "That kid's father -- was he anybody?" "No, Leo," says Gaines, "just one of those middle-class Americans who think you can get 40,000 miles on a new set of tires." Convinced of Sellers' innocence in Gloria's death, the detectives now confront him with the matter of the triple murder, but he remaines unruffled: "Nothing you have is legally germane to anything." Then, in a parting shot, he taunts Gaines about Nicole's profession and about his own dealings with her.

Hollinger refuses to accept the fact that his daughter was anything but a helpless innocent. We learn, moreover, that his mental condition is unstable and that he had been in "deep therapy" in a Veterans Administration hospital after a tour of duty in Korea. When Gaines and Belgrave tell him the truth about Gloria, he accuses them of having sold out: "You guys are all bought and paid for. Everyone knows that." Finally, to convince him, Gaines screens one of Gloria's films; when it is over, Hollinger walks away, speechless and dejected. But he has not given up: he still holds the man named Leo responsible and is determined to find out his last name -- information which Gaines has withheld from him. Now, events move rapidly as an enraged Hollinger brutally coerces Gloria's former roommate into telling him the name of the man in whose mansion the infamous party had been held. Sellers' importance, of course, reinforces Hollinger's deepest convictions about his own inability to obtain justice; and with a gun bought in a pawn shop he goes to Sellers' house and murders him in cold blood. Having realized too late what Hollinger was about to do, Gaines and Belgrave arrive at the scene of the murder, where an exasperated Gaines berrates Hollinger for not "leaving it alone" and warns him that he is likely to wind up in a mental hospital. "I want my day in court," says Hollinger. "The country owes me that." Gaines apparently feels that Marty Hollinger's day in court won't amount to much ("You're not supposed to kill important citizens like Leo Sellers") but he is genuinely moved by the man's plight and conspires to give him a second chance. Against Belgrave's wishes, Gaines begins to arrange the evidence to make it appear that Hollinger had killed Sellers in self-defence. "There's got to be a little charity in this system for the Martys and the albinos and the Glorias," he explains to Belgrave. But Belgrave protests that he would not do what is being requested of him for anybody. "You're not doing it for anybody," says Gaines. "You're doing it for a nobody." Reluctantly, Belgrave complies and the evidence is arranged accordingly; Hollinger, for his troubles, receives a painful gunshot wound to his shoulder to make matters look realistic.

With the Hollinger case behind him, Gaines decides to leave with Nicole. En route to the airport to meet her, he intervenes in a liquor store holdup and is shot to death. In the final sequence of the film Nicole is met at the airport by Belgrave; from the expression on her face when she sees Belgrave, it is apparent that she realized Gaines' tragic fate.

While Hustle is neither aesthetically overwhelming (to say the very least), nor politically incisive, there is no doubt whatsoever that a political statement is intended

-- and seriously intended at that; moreover, the intention is executed with a forthrightness that is impossible to ignore. In one sense, the film ressembles the single-mindedness of message movies: Aldrich and Shagan tell us frequently, and in no uncertain terms, that America's Marty Hollingers -- the "nobodies" who fight wars, pay taxes, obey laws, and so on -- have been betrayed by a system which makes hustlers out of nearly everyone, and charity cases out of the honest men who still believe in the old ideals. What renders the film more complex than the message movies, to say nothing of the crime melodramas discussed in chapter two, is the sustained mood of nostalgia that infuses the political cynicism -- clearly implying that things were better in days of yore -- and the moral questions raised, but never answered, by the film's conclusion.

As we have seen above, the cynicism of the film runs the gamut from vague allegations that "everyone hustles," to the more particular assertion that "important citizens" like Leo Sellers are legally untouchable: hence, the implied tolerance for, if not encouragement of, drastic measures. Because Gaines has never really come to terms with this "reality," he clings obsessively to artifacts of the past: movies, records, and so on. Even the nineteen-thirties are recalled with affection. "I'm a student of the thirties," he says during the course of the Hollinger investigation. "I love the thirties...Cole Porter.... Young girls treated with respect..." Breadlines are not part of this vision. And later, he contrasts the clothing and deportment of a contemporary drug dealer's defence lawyer -- the judge nearly stood at attention, he says, and the dealer gave Gaines "the finger" at the conclusion of the hearing -- with the defence lawyers of yesteryear: "I remember attorneys without beards and $400 jackets. Everything seemed more balanced then." The film is far too ambivalent, however, in the matter of whether Gaines' idealized reminiscences are to be taken as accurate (i.e., intended by Aldrich and Shagan as a realistic appraisal of the likelihood of justice then and now), or further illustrations of Gaines' malaise.

The ethical questions raised by the film -- especially the final assertion that in a corrupt, Darwinian world, "mere" lawfulness may have to take a back seat to private morality -- are large ones, of course, and are dealt with in a blunt, unsatisfactory way. When Sellers is, in effect, executed by Hollinger for a crime he did not commit (though he is a "known" murderer and gangster), the film is reminiscent of Dirty Harry and its imitators; but the political emphasis has shifted somewhat. Pauline Kael has argued, for example, that Hustle creates

> a romantic-liberal basis for taking the law into one's own hands. According to this movie, the whole system is rigged on the side of the rich -- the somebodies, they're called here -- and one can right the balance only by chivalrous outlaw acts. In order to protect society against the vermin, Clint Eastwood's cop hero, the tough saint Dirty Harry, had to ignore the laws, made by the liberals, that sheltered the criminals. Reynolds' Phil Gaines also violates the laws, but it's because the economic corruption is total and the poor -- the nobodies -- don't stand a chance.

Kael overstates the case -- especially since Gaines is not the executioner himself, but is merely trying to extricate the "unbalanced" Hollinger from a fate which, in the context of the film, is unwarranted. Nonetheless, in its "romantic-liberal" aspects, Hustle shares some of the weaknesses of Dirty Harry (which, for many reasons, was a much better film), not least of all a relentless, facile depreciation of almost everyone but the hero, and a smug failure to consider the broader implications of the hero's ostensibly well-motivated behavior. "We do all the wrong things for all the right reasons," Gaines tells his partner. That self-justification, Tom Milne wrote in the Monthly Film Bulletin, "might serve as a motto for a film where, as the title suggests, everybody is busy hustling to preserve some precarious foothold in a corrupt, indifferent world." The comparison with Dirty Harry is instructive in a rather different respect than that suggested by Kael. Just as Dirty Harry was regarded by some as the quintessential film of the Nixon/Mitchell law-and-order regime, Hustle is arguably an appropriate film to appear at the twilight of that regime. Instead of cold, aloof, self-contained Harry Callaghan slandering liberal courts and dispatching villains without flinching, we have insecure, sentimental, compassionate Phil Gaines bemoaning a pervasive loss of innocence and scrambling unsuccessfully to pick up the pieces.[11]

One of the "nostalgic" bases touched upon in Hustle -- through Gaines' alter ego, Hollinger -- is the Korean War, an event which was something of a surrogate for Vietnam in American films from the late sixties through to the mid-seventies. Such an indirect reference to Vietnam is, of course, entirely consistent with Aldrich's efforts to create an atmosphere of betrayed confidence and loss of innocence. Vietnam functions as a far more overt reference point in our next two films, Dog Day Afternoon and Taxi Driver, both of which feature major protagonists who are Vietnam veterans.

"What you are about to see is true," we are told at the commencement of Dog Day Afternoon. Directed by Sidney Lumet, from a screenplay by Frank Pierson, the film is based on an actual bank robbery that occurred in Brooklyn on August 22, 1972, and stars Al Pacino as Sonny, the principal perpetrator of the robbery. The film opens with a montage of street scenes emphasizing the sweltering heat, and including occasional symbolic content: an American flag is lowered in front of the bank building; and a woman and two children -- whom we will later recognize as Sonny's wife and family -- emerge from a theatre where A Star is Born is playing.

A few minutes before three o'clock in the afternoon, Sonny and his accomplices, Sal (John Cazale) and Stevie, walk into a small branch of a Brooklyn bank wielding firearms with a minimum of finesse and demanding money. All three are intense and agitated, and Stevie's nervousness gets the better of him: he wants to call the whole thing off, and leaves after promising Sonny that he will take the subway rather than their getaway car. Meanwhile, the bank manager -- apparently feeling that the robbers' inexperience and nervousness makes them all the more dangerous -- volunteers to "get you all fixed up and on your way." After finding out that the bank has only $1,100 cash on hand, Sonny, who boasts of having worked in a bank and seems to know his way around, sets fire to one of the bank's registers. The smoke from the fire escapes through a vent, and moments later the building is surrounded by police. While Sonny contemplates possible courses of action, the bank staff, who are now hostages, try to accommodate themselves to their new situation -- taking turns going to the bathroom, accepting calls from loved ones ("He wants to know what time you'll be through," says one of the girls after speaking to her husband), and berating Sonny for his ineptness ("What'd you do? Just barge in here by whim?" asks the chief teller. "I had a plan," Sonny protests. "I had a plan!").

Soon taking matters in hand, Sonny threatens to start "throwing bodies out the door." Sal assures him that he, for one, is ready to do just that -- reinforcing our growing impression that Sal, with his pallid complexion, disquieting intensity and insecurity, is more pathetic and desperate than Sonny, whose swarthy good looks, inflammatory tirades, and negligible organizational skills endear him to the bank staff and to the audience. Sonny lectures the staff on the important lesson of the Attica killings -- that the police may indiscriminately open fire on everyone, so it is in the hostages' interests to get matters resolved as quickly as possible. And in a telephone hook-up with police, he advised the officer in charge, Sergeant Moretti, that he means business: "We're Vietnam veterans so killing don't mean anything to us -- you understand?" In subsequent negotiations, he demands a jet so he and Sal can go to Algeria, which was apparently selected only because of its climate. (Sal's choice of a "foreign country" was Wyoming!) Moretti agrees, but stalls for time, and insists on the release of some hostages during various preliminary stages prior to the actual departure of the jet.

By now, the robbery has become street theatre and a media event, with Sonny as the principal performer. While Sal holds the hostages at bay with a gun, for example, Sonny steps outside and flaunts his newly-won power before hundreds of policemen, television cameras, newsmen and onlookers. He harangues the largely sympathetic crowd about how trigger-happy the police are, and insists that the police lower their weapons. When some of them fail to comply, within moments he has the crowd chanting "Attica! Attica! Attica!" while he prances back and forth in front of the building, arms in the air, conducting the whole show. Later, inside the bank, Sonny is actually interviewed on television -- conversing with the interviewer by telephone, while outside cameras record the video portion through a window. He complains about the inadequacies of his former salary as a bank teller, and his inability to get another job because he does not belong to a union. Meanwhile, Sergeant Moretti has his hands full controlling the police outside; from time to time, one of them tries to take some unauthorized initiative. On the sidelines, an F.B.I. agent named Sheldon watches all of this silently and ominously.

In the evening, Sonny demands to see his wife, and the story takes a bizarre, new twist. He has two wives:

Angela, an overweight, overbearing, vulgar woman, is the mother of his children; and Leon, a fundamentally attractive, but sickly-looking young man to whom Sonny had been ceremoniously wed by a defrocked priest. Leon is the one Sonny wants to see, and it is Leon who explains to the police the motive for the robbery. "I was a woman trapped in a man's body," he tells them; the robbery was supposed to net $2,500 for a sex change operation. Moretti tries to persuade a reluctant Leon to talk to Sonny ("Don't you think you sort of owe it to him to get him out of this? He's doing it for you"), while the F.B.I. agent, Sheldon, gradually moving into the centre of things, tries to persuade Sonny to give himself up -- and betray Sal. Sonny angrily declines. Leon agrees to talk to Sonny on the telephone, but only after Moretti threatens to charge him with being an accessory. After a tender exchange of greetings, principally concerning Leon's health, we learn that his suicide attempt had been a last, desperate effort to get away from Sonny. He is not interested in going to Algeria with Sonny, and it is obvious that he has called only to clear himself -- Sonny discovers ~~that~~ both Moretti and Sheldon are eavesdropping on what he thought was an intimate conversation.

Resigning himself to the fact that he is going away without Leon, Sonny says brief farewells to his other wife, Angela ("Sonny -- Jesus -- I saw it on TV!"), and to his mother ("I told them you were Goldwater in '64 -- in the convention"). While preparations are being made to take him and Sal to a waiting jet, Sonny -- curiously and touchingly -- prepares his last will and testament. Of a $10,000 life insurance policy, he bequeaths enough to Leon for the sex change operation, and the remainder to Angela and the children. Finally, he affirms his right to a military funeral free of charge.

At last, Sonny and Sal leave the bank, surrounded by a shield consisting of the remaining hostages. The F.B.I. man, who has long since assumed command from Moretti, specifies that there will be no trouble on their way to the airport -- though his deceitfulness has been well established. It is nighttime, as the trip to the airport begins. Though the drive itself is uneventful, preparations have been made to make sure Sonny and Sal never board the waiting jet. They are no sooner on the runway, when the driver of the car in which they are riding suddenly takes a gun from the glove compartment and shoots Sal through the head. "Don't shoot me," Sonny blurts out -- and in the final sequence we see him holding his head in his hands, as if to shut out the screams of the jet engines, while a policeman advises him of his constitutional rights. The policeman's voice is soon rendered inaudible by the noise. As Sal's body is wheeled past on a stretcher, Sonny breaks down and cries.

The closing titles inform us that the "real" Sonny is now serving a twenty-year prison sentence, that Angela and the children are on welfare, and that Leon has crossed the threshhold into womanhood.

Dog Day Afternoon is, first of all, a splendidly eccentric story that is competently and touchingly told -- although as usual in director Sidney Lumet's "urban" films, the tight closeups, perspiring faces, occasional hand-held cameras, and frequent shouting matches make the film far more intense and energetic than it ever needs to be. Whether the material presented is faithful to actual events is another question, of course, and one that need not detain us here.[12] What is of immediate consequence, however, is the fact that Lumet and Pierson, in their efforts to extract empathy and understanding for a pair of hapless outlaws, have depicted them as victims of some loosely-defined but all-encompassing unhappy condition of the contemporary urban United States. "I got all 'dese pressures," Sonny tells us several times. "I'm dyin' in here." In documenting those pressures, and in attempting to give the story a credible social ambience, Lumet and Pierson have come up with a veritable grab bag of topical issues, themes and postures: unemployment, problems of adjustment in the post-Vietnam era, citizens-versus-police, police-versus-F.B.I., Gay liberation, anti-Gay liberation, Attica, problems of sexual identity, familial responsibilities, hostage-taking incidents, and -- not least of all -- television's effect upon the events it purports to document.

If, as Richard Combs reported in his favorable Monthly Film Bulletin review, "Sonny seems to have opened a Pandora's Box of clamorous urban spirits which he has no way of controlling," it is not clear that Lumet and Pierson know quite what to do with them either. Though the "clamorous urban spirits" give the film local color, and the appearance of being topical, few of them are dealt with in any satisfactory manner. Nonetheless, at least two consistent threads running through the film are surely meant to be taken seriously: the director and writer postulate an uneasy hostages-outlaws-citizens alliance against an equally uneasy police-F.B.I. nexus; and the role of television in the entire affair is repeatedly highlighted.

The people-versus-police tension is evident very early in the film. Moments after the robbers are in control of the bank, victims begin to identify or sympathize with their captors, and apparently come to accept the argument (rightly so, in the context of the film) that the police are more likely to kill them than are the robbers. Of that aspect of the film, James Monaco, for example, has written in Sight and Sound:

> The scenes within the bank reveal a knowledge of 'victimology,' the psychology of the victims in situations like these. As the bank manager and his staff get to know the very nervous kid who has broken their routine they tend to identify with him, to see things from his perspective. They slowly realize that the police and the F.B.I. outside have as their first priority not the preservation of the hostages' lives but the preservation of an ideal of social order.

Not only are the victims threatened more by the police efforts to preserve that ideal of order, but their physical discomforts are also largely attributable to police -- as when the air conditioning system is shut down, thus aggravating some serious health problems among the bank staff. Outside the bank, the police are portrayed as trigger-happy and to some extent, inept; their every humiliation is enthusiastically applauded by the street audience.

The alliance of bandits, victims, and citizens is an uneasy one in several respects. The bank manager, despite his co-operative attitude, never really joins Sonny's cheering section; and in one scene, after he is shown to be suffering from diabetes, he denounces an ostensibly concerned Sonny for pretending to be an "angel of mercy" and rues the day Sonny ever set foot in his bank. Though they seem to like Sonny, and are thrilled at the prospect of going to Algeria, the bank staff never seem to regard Sal as anything less than volatile; they appear genuinely frightened when they are being used as shields, and truly relieved when the ordeal is over.

On the police side, the film-makers draw an interesting distinction between Moretti, the street-wise local cop, and Sheldon, the F.B.I. outsider. Moretti's short temper and shouting matches with Sonny do not conceal another kind of sensibility -- one that is manifested, for example, when he appears sincerely anxious that Leon assume some responsibility for Sonny's plight, while other policemen are smirking in the background. As James Monaco wrote, Moretti "knows his business and he has a sense of the forlornness of situations like these. Sheldon..., on the other hand, heads the F.B.I. squad and is full of supercilious contempt for the local cop's sensibilities." It must be remembered, however, that Moretti did not know his business well enough to avoid the entire incident in the first place: it was he who phoned Sonny while the robbery was in progress to announce that the building was surrounded, thus making the seizure of hostages possible.

The treatment of television that recurs throughout Dog Day Afternoon is typified by two statements Sonny makes -- early in the film, when he says "if it wasn't for the TV guys, they'd kill us all"; and later, trying to assuage Sal's anger about television reports of two homosexual robbers, when he states: "It's just a freak show to them anyway. It don't matter." Sonny uses television -- he treats it as a tool -- but he is contemptuous of it; during his interview, for example, he becomes furious about the quality of the questions being asked, and aggressively begins to cross-examine the interviewer. But Sonny is also seduced by television and caught up in its coverage of himself. As Penelope Gilliat has written in The New Yorker:

> The bank's television, watched with a gold-fish glaze by the bank manager and Sonny alike, shows holdup men and victims what is happening at the time it is happening, and this is one of the intellectual points of the film: that behavior is controlled and amended by being publicly reported. The film depicts publicity affecting action again and again, both by making the action feverish and also, contrariwise, by making it complaisant to expectation.

As Gilliat implies, Sonny is not alone in his fascination with being part of a media event: after a brief hiatus on the outside, for example, the chief teller excitedly reports to the other girls that she was interviewed on TV; and even a delivery boy is shown preening before the cameras after a televised delivery of food. But Sonny appears to be the only one who believes that his stardom is of more than momentary significance. "You know somethin', people?" he says to the hostages before their departure for the airport. "You're gonna be remembered for the rest of your lives for the day you got held up and kidnapped. We made history here."

In Taxi Driver -- directed by Martin Scorsese, from a screenplay by Paul Schrader -- the title character, Travis Bickle (Robert De Niro), is another Vietnam veteran. Like Sonny, Travis comes to think of himself in rather grandiose terms. But unlike Sonny, the "pressures" which Travis feels are not directly related to family, friends and attendant responsibilities -- in fact, he is psychotically lonely; Travis' problem is obsessive hatred of the environment in which he routinely (perhaps masochistically) functions, and his inability to find a place for himself in that environment.

Taxi Driver's opening shot cleverly incorporates what will quickly be established as the film's central metaphor: it is night, and as vapor rises from a New York sewer, a yellow cab slowly, almost mysteriously, drifts through the "fog" en route to an unknown destination. From that moment, and throughout the film, we are never allowed to forget that for Travis Bickle, the driver of the cab, New York is a nauseous cesspool of corruption, depravity and despair. The city by night is especially a contradiction: it exudes warmth and color, but it is cold and bleak; it is seductive, but it repels; it shines and stinks. Travis, a 26-year-old uprooted, alienated ex-marine, has trouble sleeping nights. So he prowls the sensuously-lit streets, and observes with a deep loathing the human wreckage which passes through his cab, cruises the sidewalks, or haunts the alleys: whores, pimps, muggers, junkies, dealers, thieves, maniacs, and murderers. By day, he passes the time at pornographic movies, which he watches indifferently, or composes a troubled and sometimes vitriolic diary which expresses his contempt for the city's human refuse and affirms his need for "a sense of someplace to go."

In the entire film, Travis has two major encounters with the opposite sex. The first of these occurs very early, when he meets Betsy, an attractive young woman ("she looked like an angel," he writes in his diary) who is working at the campaign headquarters of Senator Charles Palantine -- a Presidential candidate of unspecified party affiliation who is campaigning in the New York primary. Initially, Betsy rebuffs Travis, but he is insistent -- going so far as to offer his services as a campaign volunteer, though he knows nothing about what Palantine stands for, not even the candidate's oft-mentioned "mandatory welfare program." "I'm sure he'll make a good President," says Travis. "I don't know about his stand on welfare, but I'm sure it's a good stand." Travis' ignorance is understandable, since the candidate's vaguely populist platform ("We Are the People!" is his campaign slogan) takes a back seat to his "image" -- thanks partly to Betsy, who feels that selling a candidate is like selling mouthwash.

Though Travis' campaign services are declined, Betsy develops a certain fascination for him, and eventually agrees to a date. But their relationship is quickly terminated when, quite incredibly, he takes her to a pornographic film. She is not amused, and refuses to see him again. His parting shot, via telephone is: "You're in hell...and you're gonna burn in hell," and he dismisses her in his diary as being "cold and distant like all the others." Later, in his cab, he listens in suspenseful silence while a customer flaunts a .44 Magnum hand gun and speculates in lurid detail about what the gun might do to various parts of a woman's body -- namely, that of his unfaithful wife.

Increasingly sickened by the "scum" around him, and apparently depressed about the unsuccessful flirtation with Betsy, Travis solicits help from a fellow cabbie named Wizard. Wizard's advice is more verbose than articulate, and appears to only deepen Travis' sense of loneliness. Presently, Travis arranges a meeting between himself and a smooth-talking, well-groomed, trafficker in illegal arms. Here again, the contradictions of Travis' world are underlined: the guns are lovingly photographed against a luscious background, and salesman and client respectfully fondle them, while the former matter-of-factly talks of quality and price; the contradiction, of course, is between the elegant beauty of the object, and its crude, lethal function. Travis buys himself an arsenal of weapons, and goes into hard training -- including target practice, physical fitness, and an austere diet ("no more destroyers of my body"). His "mission" is barely hinted at, but he seems determined to strike a blow against the scum of the city -- a blow that will cause others to hail him as "a man who would not take it anymore... Here is someone who stood up."

The most concrete hint as to who will bear the brunt of Travis' frustration and rage comes when we see him stalking the campaign of Senator Palantine -- who is intimating that "the people" (presumably led by him) can deliver themselves from inflation, unemployment, poverty and war. While monitoring the campaign, and preparing himself for his ultimate mission, Travis has occasion to shoot a black holdup man in a grocery story -- after which an enraged, grateful store owner savagely beats the corpse while Travis slips away. The entire scene -- which seems gratuitous at first glance -- anticipates the film's conclusion.

The other key event that happens while Travis is in training is his meeting with, and attempt to "save," a twelve-and-a-half year old prostitute. If Betsy, in her white dress, was an angel whom Travis would ultimately consign to hell, Iris, the prostitute, is a fallen angel whom Travis would redeem. Her pimp -- a "jive-talking," agitated bundle of muscle and energy called Sport -- sells Iris for a dollar a minute. Needless to say, Sport is the quintessence of what Travis hates -- "the scum of the earth...the lowest scum I have ever seen." Travis buys time with Iris only to persuade her to go back to her parents and school. She is reluctant, even after another meeting with him, but she does come to regard him with some affection.

By now, Travis has grown certain of his mission. "Now I see clearly," he writes in his diary. "My whole life has been pointed in one direction. There never has been any choice for me." At a campaign rally for Palantine, Travis appears in army fatigues that conceal a number of weapons; His head is shaved in a Mohawk cut -- another preparation ritual -- and he grins foolishly but menacingly as he listens to Palantine speak ("No longer will we the people suffer for the few... We are the people, you and I, and it is time to let the people rule"). Not surprisingly, Travis manages to arouse the suspicions of secret service men, and he is forced to flee without firing a shot. His mission now assumes a rather different character: he proceeds to Sport's hang-out, and -- in a prolonged, vivid stunningly-executed bloodbath -- he slaughters Sport, along with an underworld figure who is with Iris, and a man in a corridor who is "timing" her sessions. Then, exhausted, dazed and bloody, Travis hold the gun to his own head and pulls the trigger. It's empty. He points a bloody index finger to his head, holding his thumb back as if it were the hammer of a gun, and silently mouths the sound of a gun shot.

Finally, we are again in Travis' room. The camera pans over newspaper clippings which tell us that Travis is alive and well and has been hailed as a local hero ("Taxi Driver Battles Gangsters"; "Taxi Driver Hero to Recover"). Iris is back with her family -- happily, one gathers -- and she is going to school ("Parents Express Shock, Gratitude"). Travis is back on his feet and apparently on an even keel -- at least for a time. In a chance meeting with Betsy, who hails his cab, he is rather aloof, but they exchange a few pleasantries. "I hear Palantine got the nomination," Travis remarks, "Yes," she replies, and expresses some excitement about the forthcoming election. "I hope he wins," says Travis. Then after a brief exchange about the state of his own health, he drops her off and disappears into the cold, iridescent night.

The meaning of Taxi Driver is at once self-evident and controversial -- self-evident, in the sense that certain themes are obvious, and have been noted with some consistency by those who wrote about the film (and there were many who did); and controversial, in the sense that not everyone agreed on certain other aspects of the film -- notably, the worth and meaning of the climactic blood bath.[13]

Considering the obvious first, the film is clearly about loneliness and alienation in an indifferent, decaying urban environment -- "the soul sickness of urban alienation" is the expression Richard Combs used in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* -- and about a man's inability to enter into any sustained, satisfying relationships with other people. Travis is *in* the city without really being a part of it; he moves restlessly and relentlessly through its streets -- always mobile and never finding sanctuary. In a perverse way, he is self-contained: his most articulate, even poetic, moments are in his conversations with himself -- i.e., in his diary entries. "Loneliness is following my whole life," he writes. "In bars and cars, sidewalks, everywhere. There's no escape. I'm God's lonely man."

But Travis is not just lonely -- he is also powerless. He cruises through the city, observing the things he detests, and is helpless to do anything about them. During a chance meeting with Palantine, the Senator asks him, in a condescending way, what politicians should be doing. Travis says they should "clean up this city...it's like an

d

open sewer." That is Travis' political "platform," and that becomes his mission. Significantly, when he writes his parents prior to the attempt to kill Palantine, he tells them he is "doing something for the government." Significantly too, the film is structured so that Travis' hostility is initially directed towards a politician -- a man who would wield power in the name of "the people" -- and it is only when the assassination attempt is thwarted that he attacks the more proximate sources of frustration.[14] Instead of performing an illegitimate political act, and almost certainly bringing about his own death, Travis must settle for something less symbolic and more concrete -- and then turn the gun on himself. Scorsese and Schrader seem to be telling us that Travis, in a feeble and confused way, is trying to relate the specifics of his urban hell to politics in the larger sense; and once making that connection, he is able to articulate his rage only in a violent, nihilistic way. Ironically, as Richard Schickel has noted in Time, the extraordinary, bloody outcome "turns an individual who was within a hair-trigger length of being a national horror into a local hero."

The thing that mediates Travis' frustration and compensates for his sense of powerlessness is the gun -- or, more accurately, a veritable arsenal of guns. Though Travis has contempt for many of the people he meets, he is normally quite compliant, even to the point of docility; in particular, he seems ill at ease and unsure of himself talking to the likes of Sport, Iris's pimp. But in his room, alone with his myriad weapons and trying them on for size, he is a more dominant figure. Staring into a mirror past his own image, Travis confronts an imaginary foe about an imaginary affront, and his voice is defiant and threatening: "You talkin' to _me_? You talkin' to _me_? Who you talkin' to?" He glances left and right and again fixes a piercing gaze on the illusory offender: "You fuck! You _must_ be talkin' to me..." Lethally armed, he practices his lines and plays his role with consummate skill, growing deadlier before our eyes. The guns compensate for his sense of powerlessness, bolster his ego, and provide the means by which he expresses his outrage. As Kael wrote in _The New Yorker_: "Violence is Travis' only means of expressing himself. He has not been able to hurdle the barriers to being seen and felt. When he blasts through, it is his only way of telling the city that he is there."

The massacre at the conclusion of the film is multifaceted. It is, perhaps, a too simplistic affirmation of an unqualified frustration-aggression hypothesis; but it is also a logical extension of the redemption theme which is evident at various points earlier in the film -- the redemption of Iris, the fallen angel, and Travis himself. Additionally, the massacre is -- as Schrader himself pointed out in a Film Comment interview -- Travis' attempt to destroy himself:

> Travis' problem is the same as the existential hero's, that is, should I exist? But Travis does not understand that this is his problem, so he focuses it elsewhere: and I think that is a mark of the immaturity and the youngness of our country. We don't properly understand the nature of the problem, so the self-destructive impulse, instead of being inner-directed, as it is in Japan, Europe, any of the older cultures, becomes outer-directed. The man who feels the time has come to die will go out and kill other people rather than kill himself.

While not all of Schrader's intellectual points emerge clearly in the film, it does convey the impression from time to time that Travis' preoccupation with the scum of the city is rooted in a destructive self-loathing. His hatred goes well beyond anything ressembling "understandable outrage," and he takes no steps whatsoever to extricate himself from the objects of his loathing; in fact, it might be said with some fairness that he wallows in the scum while complaining of being unclean. He hates the city and himself.

Finally, one should note that the film's "epilog" -- the segment in which Travis emerges as a hero -- is entirely unsatisfactory. Among other things, it is utterly incredible that the heroic treatment would be accorded him, given the fact that he was clearly spotted by secret service personnel during his earlier attempt to murder a presidential candidate. More importantly, though, the entire sequence smacks of contrived irony and seems singularly out of place in a film that had heretofore been one of such style, complexity, and depth.

Institutions

The remaining four contemporary American films that will be considered here involve a shift in perspective away from the hard-edged urban realism that is attempted with varying degrees of success in Hustle, Dog Day Afternoon, and Taxi Driver. The Killer Elite, Three Days of the Condor, and All the President's Men are more institutionally oriented: the first two, which are of lesser interest, deal with the C.I.A. and related matters, while the third, of course, celebrates an ideal of journalism. Nashville, the fourth film of this set, is also institutionally oriented, dealing as it does with the American Presidency and presidential politics, but the film is so uniquely complex and impressionistic that it is really in a class by itself.

The Killer Elite, directed by Sam Peckinpah from a screenplay by Marc Norman and Stirling Silliphant, posits the existence of a private company, ComTeg, to whom the C.I.A. sub-contracts special assignments -- principally those involving either the elimination of American defectors and "other threats to national security," or the protection of defectors from the (unnamed) "other side." The film's prologue explains, in tongue-in-cheek fashion, that the idea of the C.I.A. actually employing such a company is "preposterous," and assures us that what follows is a work of fiction. The film itself, as we shall see, is alternately preposterous and provocative.

Mike Locken (James Cann) and George Hansen (Robert Duvall) are mercenaries employed by ComTeg and based in San Francisco. They appear to enjoy a close, if sometimes tentative, friendship, and have obviously been professionally associated for many years. Their assignment at the beginning of the film is the protection of a man named Vorodny, a defector from an unspecified other country. The assignment is astonishingly and violently terminated when Hansen murders Vorodny and turns the gun on his erstwhile partner, shooting Locken with the clear intention of crippling rather than killing him. "You've just been retired, Mike," Hansen announces with a hint of sadness and regret, and leaves the scene.

While recuperating from his wounds -- a process that is depicted in a lengthy, detailed, and very effective sequence in the film -- Locken is visited by Lawrence Weyburn, ComTeg's division chief, and Cap Collis, the district supervisor. They inform him that George Hansen sold out to someone who "made him a better offer." Locken, notwithstanding his insistence that he will be coming back on active duty, is told that he is finished, and will be awarded a full disability pension for his troubles. Though Weyburn is at least sympathetic to Locken's plight, Collis is downright hostile; in a later encounter, Collis taunts Locken about his injuries, assures him that "heroism is old-fashioned," and warns him against attempting a comeback. Nonetheless, with surgery, therapy, martial arts training, sheer determination, and the tender care of a nurse, Locken pulls through and recovers.

It transpires then that a certain "Asian politician," Yuen Chung, is visiting the United States. The C.I.A. has contracted with ComTeg to have Yuen protected from a team of Japanese assassins augmented by none other than George Hansen. Weyburn, upon hearing that Hansen has surfaced, orders Collis to give the assignment to the now-recovered Locken, and to allow Locken to choose his own "team." Locken is told to keep the Asian alive -- not least of all, one gathers, because it would be politically untidy if he were killed in the U.S. -- and to "tag" (i.e. kill) the treasonous Hansen. His team includes Jerome Miller, a younger man who appears to adore guns and who had been dismissed by ComTeg on the grounds that he was a "psycho," and Mac, a stocky garage mechanic who had also been employed by ComTeg before leaving in apparent disillusionment ("I used to think what I did was nice and necessary. What did I know?).

After one of several violent confrontations with Hansen and his Japanese associates, Locken, Jerome and Mac take Yuen Chung and his entourage (including a daughter) to a dockside warehouse, where they are to be held pending their departure by sea the following morning. While all this has been happening, Weyburn has grown increasingly convinced that Collis is in league with Hansen. Partly because he wants Collis "smoked out," and partly because he wants unfinished company business taken care of, he lets events take their course, helped along by a little manipulation on his part. Collis is allowed to inform Hansen about the location of the warehouse, but during the ensuing confrontation Hansen is killed by Jerome. Locken's feelings about Hansen, his former partner, involved considerations other than simple revenge, and he seems genuinely distressed by the killing.

With Chung still safely in custody and Hansen dead, there remains only the final rendezvous, when the Asians will be transferred to a boat that will take them out of the U.S. But Collis has other things in mind. The rendezvous is to take place aboard a ship in a naval "mothball fleet," and Collis makes sure that there are virtually hoards of Japanese lying in wait for Locken and his charges.

The final confrontation is absurd, colorful, and almost surreal. By the time it is over, Jerome is dead, as are most of the would-be assassins, and Locken has paid Collis back in kind -- by "retiring" him with crippling gun fire. With the unpleasant work now completed, Weyburn arrives on the scene and, with some satisfaction, offers Locken the job Collis has just vacated. Disillusioned, Locken declines; instead, he and Mac opt for the open sea and parts unknown, in a yacht Collis had used in an attempt to buy him off.

With its convoluted plot, and stylized violent sequences, The Killer Elite is so comically unreal in places that it comes as no surprise that some of its more serious overtones were overlooked. At one level, of course, the politics of the film are rather obvious and may be summed up, in the words of Tom Milne in the Monthly Film Bulletin, as "fashionable cynicism" -- about the C.I.A. political ideologies, and even human nature. At another level, however, the film's fashionable, shallow "anti-C.I.A." content is invested with Peckinpah's own sensibilities -- a concern about individual survival in the face of organizational imperatives, and an affirmation of "private" values and private codes of honor over publicly-stated, manipulatively-used larger allegiances. In The Killer Elite, George Hansen's ultimate crime, and his real tragedy as a man, is his betrayal of his friend -- not his betrayal of ComTeg or the C.I.A.

The film takes a dim view of the C.I.A. -- for which ComTeg is an obvious surrogate -- but unlike others of its ilk (including Three Days of the Condor, which we shall consider presently), it never raises questions about "democratic control," and it does not score points about alleged C.I.A. methods. Peckinpah seems more concerned with the impact of the organization on the individuals who serve it, than with the validity or propriety of the organization itself; and he consistently eschews any pretensions of sensational revelations -- which would have been opportunistic -- in favor of an examination of the damage wrought when men yield to a morality external to themselves.

Fundamentally, The Killer Elite is about what Nigel Andrews, in Sight and Sound several years ago, called

> the central concern of Sam Peckinpah's work... the conflict between survival and individualism:... his films embody in their stories and characters a tension between two ideals of fundamental value which remain perversely hard to reconcile.15

The survivors, in this context, are those who, like George Hansen, are opportunistic enough to make whatever compromises are necessary. The individuals are those who, like Mike Locken, are clinging to outmoded, "old-fashioned" notions of heroism and loyalty -- not to a country, but to a code of personal honor. As Kael intimated, in her New Yorker review, Peckinpah's moral thrust in The Killer Elite is based "less on what his characters do than on wh what they wouldn't stoop to do."[16] Locken would not stoop to become part of the organization machinery -- either as a basically decent, burnt-out cynic like Weyburn, or as a completely amoral chameleon like Collis. When Locken and his friend, Mac, sail away on a yacht at the end of the film, the choice they have made is beautifully visualized: on the battleship that was so recently a battleground are Weyburn, Collis, and the corpses of those who died in outrageous, mindless combat -- "cleaning up a little office politics," as Mac put it; on the yacht are Locken and Mac, whose personal relationship has transcended their commitment to the various systems that compete for their services. Pictorially, Peckinpah offers the perfect metaphor for his movie -- indeed for many of his movies: on the one hand, rows of "dead" battleships, rigid, repetitive shapes in cold, lifeless steel; on the other hand, a sail boat bobbing in the water, free, unique, and elemental.

Finally, one should note that in terms of the scripting of the film, Mac, the mechanic, emerges as the spokesman for the film's political point of view -- denouncing all "power systems" as the enemy of people like

Locken and himself. "They're all tryin' to hurt you, Mike," he says at one point. "They use guys like you. All the goddam power systems -- all the big shots with their gin-and-fizzes. There's not one power system that cares about civilians... They need guys like you to do their bloodletting while they're busy making speeches about freedom and progress." If Mac's diatribes are rather too explicit and pat, to say nothing of long-winded, the "Asian politician" whose protection is the occasion of so much bloodletting in the film remains an enigmatic, poorly-defined figure throughout. One gathers that he is a liberal democrat, in as much as he is determined to lead a non-revolutionary political opposition in his home country; and he seems undoubtedly courageous. Beyond that, he remains -- in the words of one of too many cynical characters in the film -- "just another ambitious politician." At the same time, it seems consistent with Peckinpah's theme that the film is more concerned with Locken's individual ethics, than with the details of the Asian politician's program.

Though it is stylistically more opulent than The Killer Elite, Three Days of the Condor is plotted in a somewhat similar fashion. It too is about the C.I.A., and it too highlights the activities of an innocent hero caught in a web of inter-organizational intrigue that he does not fully comprehend. By way of contrast, Condor's hero is not a professional field agent, and he is more concerned about some of the larger issues raised by "the company's" activities than was the James Caan character in The Killer Elite.

The hero of Three Days of the Condor is Joe Turner (played by Robert Redford), an aspiring writer who is currently in the employ of the "American Literary Historical Society" -- a New York-based C.I.A. sub-section involved in the analysis of espionage and thriller literature for possible security-related information. The mechanics of the operation are never satisfactorily explained in the film, though it is made clear that Turner (whose code name is "Condor") is onto something when he notices that a book that did not sell very well was translated nonetheless into a surprising variety of languages. Little does he realize the consequences of that discovery. One day he leaves work by an unauthorized back exit to get some food at a nearby diner. Believing that all members of the sub-section are in the building, a team of assassins headed by a Mr. Joubert (Max von Sydow) murders all Turner's colleagues. When Turner returns to this appalling spectacle, he quickly realizes that he too was meant to be killed. In a state of growing paranoia, he takes to the streets, suspicious of everyone around him and determined to trust no one until he finds out what is going on.

Turner telephones the organization's Deputy Director, Higgens (Cliff Robertson), tells him what has happened, and insists on being "brought in." "I'm not a field agent," he says earnestly, "I just read books." Higgens, after confirming the murders and scolding Turner for being in violation of security procedures, assures him that the head of his section -- a man named Wicks -- will see him safely "home." A meeting will be arranged with Wicks, who will be accompanied by a close friend of Turner's, as further assurance that everything is above board. But it is not. As soon as Turner is within range, Wicks opens fire on him, and murders Turner's friend at point-blank range. Wicks himself is critically wounded in the exchange of gunfire with Turner. It is then made to appear that Turner is acting in bad faith, thus isolating him further from his erstwhile employers and deepening his mistrust of them.

With nowhere to go and no one to turn to, Turner "randomly" selects a woman shopper (Faye Dunaway) and forces her at gunpoint to take him to her residence. Thus begins a lengthy sequence in which, all too predictably, Turner and the woman, Kathy, grow increasingly fond of one another -- she becoming less a bound-and-gagged kidnap victim than a willing accomplice. She helps him fight off and kill a murderous fake mailman, and helps him confirm the identity of Higgens so that when a meeting is arranged with him, Turner can be sure he has got the right man. Despite his growing affection for her, Turner never fully trusts Kathy -- he will never completely trust anyone again -- and ultimately they go their separate ways.

Meanwhile, Turner -- stalked by Joubert and under a growing cloud of suspicion by the C.I.A. -- has begun to unravel some of the mystery. In the dead "mailman's" pocket he finds a slip of paper with a telephone number for "Five Continent Imports"; it is Wicks' number. Wicks was the man to whom Turner's sub-section reported, and the man who had tried to shoot Turner earlier. When he relays this information to Higgens, Turner is told that Wicks himself is dead; he had been murdered in his hospital bed while recuperating from the wounds Turner had inflicted.

After the dead "mailman" and Wicks are found to have worked together before, in the Middle East, a further link in the chain is established, this one involving Lenord Atwood, the C.I.A. department head responsible for Middle East operations. Surmising that Atwood is operating "a C.I.A. within the C.I.A." -- an organization within the larger structure, but independent of it -- Turner sets out to find why. He goes to Atwood's house to confront him with what he knows, but they are both surprised by Joubert.

Astonishingly, Joubert kills Atwood, the man for whom he had been working, and the one who presumably had ordered the murder of Turner and his colleagues. It turns out that Joubert, a cold-blooded professional, had been re-hired by the "legitimate" C.I.A. to kill Atwood once the latter was flushed out by Turner. Now, Joubert warns Turner that he has become an embarrassment and an inconvenience to the company, and advises him, for safety's sake, to leave the United States. Turner declines.

There remains the question of what Atwood and his people were up to -- what was so important that all the killings were necessary. Turner gets some answers from Higgens during a final sidewalk confrontation. The C.I.A. had prepared contingency plans to raid the oil-rich Middle East countries. Higgens insists on calling the proposals "games" rather than "plans," and assures Turner that the company would never agree to actually do such a thing, at least not while "all this heat was on" -- a reference to the then-current exposés of C.I.A. activities in the United States and abroad. Atwood, however, took the games seriously ("He was really going to do it"), and it was Atwood's covert network that Turner and his colleagues had discovered. That's why they were killed.

Turner professes astonishment that such plans existed in the first place, without public knowledge, consultation, or debate, and seems to regard the emergence of Atwood's group as a logical consequence of so much secrecy, paranoia, and mistrust of open deliberations. "Atwood is you," Turner tells Higgens. "He's all you guys." Higgens argues, in effect, that the C.I.A. was taking anticipatory action that was in the public interest -- that if the public were aware of the serious possibility of fuel shortages in the United States over the next several years, the public would want its government to prepare for just the kind of response that had been under consideration. Turner is unconvinced. "What do you think the people would want us to do?" Higgens challenges. "Ask them," says Turner. Finally, he tells Higgens that he has given the whole story to the New York Times. Higgens is angry and contemptuous. They have been walking all this time, and are just outside the Times building during the final exchange. "How do you know they'll print it?" Higgens asks. "They'll print it," Turner replies. Higgens repeats the question: "How do you know?" And the film ends on a freeze frame, with Turner outside the Times building, looking hopeful and anxious; also locked into the composition is a sidewalk Salvation Army band.

The word that most readily comes to mind when one reflects upon Three Days of the Condor is "fashionable" -- not necessarily in a negative or highly critical sense, but as an adjective that is suggestive of the general mood and impact of the film. Its then-topical themes (C.I.A. plots and counterplots, oil shortages, the subversion of democratic processes), its commercial treatment (violence, romance, and a dash of self-righteousness), and the suggested conclusion (the free press will expose the miscreants and save the country), all conspire to give the film an air of concerned liberalism that is dramatized in an exciting, glamourous way. The film's liberalism is never more carefully delineated than in the portrayal of the central character, who is so very definitely in the C.I.A. but not of it: not only does he wear blue jeans to work and ride a motorcycle, but it is made clear that he is only biding his time in the employ of the company, pending an altogether more "respectable" career as an author. Ironically, however, Turner's own attempts to disassociate himself from C.I.A. activities -- his repeated protestations that he "just reads books" -- are ineffective when his book-reading is the very thing that opens the Pandora's box of violence and death.

Notwithstanding its stylishness (a word frequently and not always favorably, used by critics to describe the film), Condor at the very least attempts to raise a politically-relevant issue or two. The entire question debated by Turner and the C.I.A. Deputy Director as to whether such an institution has a responsibility to act in what it "knows" to be the public interest, though the public may not realize it yet, is an open invitation to audiences to reflect upon a matter of far-reaching implications -- especially if one were to extrapolate to other areas of government planning. Audience response to the invitation may be largely or entirely passive, but it is rare in popular films that audiences are so openly confronted with such questions.

While some observers have taken pains to point out that _Condor's_ ending -- Turner wondering if the _Times_ will print his story -- is nothing but a builtin trailer for _All the President's Men_ (in which Redford plays _Washington Post_ reporter Bob Woodward) it can also be argued, as James Monaco did in _Take One_, that the ending is a further indication of director Pollack's

> serious political aspirations. We wait to see how Pollack will handle them: if hero Redford wins, then the film will be telling us to go find our own heroes; if he loses, then we'll get the message that fighting the CIA is futile. But Lorenzo Semple, Jr. and David Reyfield have come up with a very sophisticated twist for the end of the film...which avoids both those pitfalls and throws the political question right in our laps. Condor's a masterful combination of exploitation, thriller, and politics.

The question to which Monaco refers is not whether the Times will print the story, but whether the public will believe it, and accept the free press as the "savior" of the system -- the latter theme being clearly suggested by the Salvation Army band which is visually prominent in the final freeze frame, and by the film's otherwise unnecessary Christmas setting. In the context of the film the answer to the concluding question is left in some doubt; but in another sense audiences can be presumed to "know" the answer by virtue of their massive exposure to Watergate and related scandals. From that perspective, the film's ending is no more provocative than listening to the first half of a two-line commercial jingle: the sponsor can rely upon the audience to psychologically complete the jingle with the familiar second line. Though Pollack and his screenwriters may mean to provoke audiences, the effect may be to merely reassure them about the "message" of Watergate and related events.

One aspect of Three Days of the Condor that seems to very clearly date it as a mid-seventies American film is the sense of paranoia that pervades it. Indeed, the Globe and Mail's Martin Knelman, for one, went so far as to claim that Condor "demonstrates how paranoia has become a central myth in American mass culture," while Pauline Kael (in The New Yorker) underscored and criticized the film's presumption that "the enemy is omnipresent and essentially invisible. There's no solution to the mystery. The message is that the past was corrupt and there may not be a future." In a surprisingly perceptive comment, Urjo Kareda, writing in Maclean's, got closer to the root of the film's ostensible timliness when he argued that the

> conspiracy-paranoia axis in films is now enormously profitable because it is so hugely persuasive, with so much corroborative evidence available. It also provides a neat solution to the old problem of a thriller's loose ends. Sydney Pollack's film, for instance, generates an efficient, fairly mechanical excitement, but at its core is incoherent. Today, the lack of logic within a movie seems to provide it with a more authentic, even documentary flavor. Audiences no longer expect to understand events; we now assume that our rate of comprehension will be at least one conspiracy away from the reality.

Interestingly, Kareda's opinion is consistent with a view expressed by Pollack himself, in a Film Comment interview, when he talked about the notion of a subversive C.I.A. group planning an invasion of the Middle East: "We thought it was a really wild idea until we started to read the newspaper headlines while we were in the middle of shooting."

Notwithstanding the various broad and subtle allusions to Watergate in several of the American films in our sample, the definitive Watergate film -- and the most thoroughgoing homage to the role of the press in dethroning Nixon and his associates -- is, of course, All the President's Men. That film went into release approximately six months after Condor, and featured Redford as Bob Woodward, and Dustin Hoffman as Carl Bernstein -- the celebrated Washington Post investigative reporters who were instrumental in bringing the ramifications of the original Watergate burglary to the light of day. Woodward and Bernstein are also the authors of the book on which the film is based.

Relative to most of the films we have been discussing, All the President's Men is importantly non-fictional: actual events and real people are depicted, most portrayed by actors and actresses, but some appearing as themselves, as when former President Nixon is seen in several excerpts from television news footage; and in dramatizing the material, the screen treatment stays very close to what are generally recognized to be the facts of the situation. A second, and related, aspect of the film that makes it unusual in our sample is the fact that the broad outline of the story is, to say the very least, far more familiar than what one finds or expects in more conventional fiction films.

The movie opens with an extreme close-up of typewriter keys hammering out a date on glaring white paper; the sound of the keys striking the paper is amplified and enhanced in such a way that it could be mistaken for gunfire. Then, on a newsroom television screen, we see Nixon's triumphant arrival to deliver the January 1973 State of the Union address. The scene fades to black, then fades in again for a dramatization of the Watergate break-in (the burglary of the Democratic National Committee headquarters in the Watergate building complex) that had taken place about seven months earlier, on June 17, 1972. What the film covers is the investigative work done by Woodward and Bernstein during that critical seven-month period. Though much of this material is too well known to require detailed explication here, a summary of the events depicted (or alluded to) in the film will probably prove helpful.

The Watergate burglary is terminated in progress and five male suspects are arrested, after their activities have been detected by an alert security guard (Frank Wills, who plays himself in the film). Though the five men were carrying sophisticated electronic surveillance equipment, coverage of their Saturday morning arraignment is regarded as a routine assignment by freshman Washington Post reporter, Bob Woodward. His suspicions are aroused, however, when he finds that the five men have their own legal counsel -- a "country club lawyer" -- and when he learns, during the brief court appearance, that one of the five, James McCord, once worked for the C.I.A. While Woodward is writing his story back at the Post newsroom, he is irritated to discover that another, more experienced reporter, Carl Bernstein, has taken an interest in the case. Eventually, of course, the two are jointly assigned to the story, and come to respect and like one another.

Their initial investigations show that one of the burglars has connections with E. Howard Hunt, another former C.I.A. operative who has also been a White House consultant and is currently an associate of Charles Colson, the President's Special Counsel. It appears, too, that Hunt was no ordinary consultant, but was involved in various political intelligence activities that included an investigation into the private life of Senator Edward Kennedy. Still uncertain about where their story is taking them, Woodward contacts an important administration official -- known only as "Deep Throat" throughout the book and the film -- and arranges the first of what will be a series of secret meetings in an undergound parkade. Deep Throat refuses to volunteer the apparently considerable information he has about Watergate, but he agrees to act as an unnamed confirming source for the two reporters, and promises to keep their investigation on the right path. And he does give one piece of advice freely: Woodward and Bernstein should "follow the money" -- i.e., trace the funds that were used to finance the burglary and to pay the legal fees of the five suspects.

In Florida, where the burglars had been based, Bernstein examines bank records that were subpoenaed by police, and finds, among other things, that a cashier's cheque for $25,000 payable to a Kenneth Dahlberg, had been deposited to the account of Bernard Barker, one of the burglars. Dahlberg, they discover, is the Midwest finance chairman of the Committee for the Re-election of the President (C.R.P., invariably referred to as "Creep"). When Dahlberg is questioned about this, he claims that the cheque was one he had turned over to Maurice Stans, the national finance chairman of C.R.P. -- an allegation that clearly raises the possibility that the burglary had in fact been financed by the President's re-election committee.

Following up the Stans connection -- with some tips from Deep Throat and with the reluctant assistance of a former C.R.P. bookkeeper and disillusioned former C.R.P. Treasurer, Hugh Sloan -- Woodward and Bernstein are able to confirm the existence of a secret, illegal fund at C.R.P. headquarters. The fund was used to finance political "dirty tricks" or "covert operations," including, of course, the Watergate burglary itself and the notorious "Canuck" letter that had had such a disasterous effect on the primary campaign of Democratic Senator Edmund Muskie. The reporters eventually learn that the fund was controlled by C.R.P. officials Stans, Jeb Stuart Magruder, Herbert Kalmbach, and none other than John Mitchell, C.R.P. campaign director and former Attorney General of the United States. Astonishingly, Woodward learns from Deep Throat that the chain of evidence goes beyond Mitchell, an assertion that lends further weight to what they had been told earlier by Hugh Sloan -- that the committee was not an independent operation, and that everything was cleared with the White House.

Various indicators now point to H.R. Haldeman, the White House Chief of Staff whose power was believed to be second only to the President's. Though it appears Haldeman may have been the fifth man who controlled the illegal fund at C.R.P., Woodward and Bernstein have trouble confirming this with their sources. Sloan will say only that he would have "no problem" if Haldeman were named as the fifth controller of the fund, and a Justice Department official is equally ambiguous in his "confirmation." The two reporters write the Haldeman story, but they erroneously report that Sloan implicated Haldeman during secret Grand Jury testimony. When Sloan himself publicly and emphatically denies this, the Post's entire Watergate coverage is in danger of being discredited, not least of all by White House Press Secretary, Ron Ziegler. Woodward and

Bernstein try to find out where they went wrong. Sloan finally admits to Bernstein that the reason he had not mentioned Haldeman to the grand jury was that he had not been *asked* about Haldeman -- a clear indication of how suspiciously limited the "official" investigation had been to that point. In other words, the Haldeman story had been technically incorrect, but substantively true: Haldeman was the fifth controller. In a dramatic confrontation with Deep Throat -- Woodward angrily exhorting him to stop playing games and tell what he knows -- the substance of the Haldeman story is again confirmed. And astonishingly, Deep Throat warns Woodward that he and Bernstein's lives are in danger. He also fills Woodward in on the extent of the administration's attempt to cover up the Watergate affair -- a cover-up which, he says, involves the entire U.S. intelligence community including the F.B.I. and the C.I.A.

In the final sequence of the film, Woodward and Bernstein are in the empty *Post* newsroom typing their stories. It is January, 1973, and the film has come full circle. A television set shows Nixon being sworn in for his second term of office, pledging to preserve, protect and defend the American constitution. Ultimately, the sound of a band playing "Hail to the Chief" and the noise of a 21-gun salute are gradually overtaken by the relentless hammering of the typewriter keys. The scene then dissolves to a teletype machine which rapidly chronicles subsequent developments in the Watergate story up to Nixon's resignation on August 9, 1974.

No plot summary can do complete justice to a film, of course, and the foregoing must be tempered by at least one broad, qualifying observation. All the President's Men is not really that neatly linear in the presentation of its story: director Alan J. Pakula, and his screenwriter, William Goldman, try to show in some detail the frequently tedious methodology of investigative reporting, so that in many ways the film is not so much about the Watergate story as it is about how that story was pieced together. And in documenting that, the film-makers go to great lengths to create both a credible newsroom ambience, and a sense of the political climate in which the story is set. To cite one very general example, throughout the film the reporters must subject hunches, notes, stories, and hypotheses to the scrutiny and criticism of watchful superiors, who are sometimes nervous, always sceptical, and frequently -- but not invariably -- encouraging. The most prominent among these is, of course, the Post's formidable, larger-than-life Executive Editor, Benjamin Bradlee (Jason Robarts). Bradlee and his associates have good reason to be cautious: the period covered by the film was one of peak popularity and power for the Nixon administration; the President's appearances in the film are uniformly triumphant, and -- amidst news of an imminent Vietnam settlement and the McGovern-Eagleton affair -- his reelection by a huge majority rightly appears inevitable.

In trying to depict so much of the painstaking work that Woodward and Bernstein perform, Pakula is not merely involved in a pedantic effort to teach journalistic techniques -- however atypical those techniques and the circumstances of their utilization might have been. He is also unabashedly paying tribute to the viability of sheer individual doggedness in the face of awesome political power -- that two unknown reporters, with the considerable backing of a major newspaper, could successfully chip away and destroy what must have seemed indestructable. And their weapons, in effect, are pencils and paper -- as Pakula himself has pointed out in a Film Comment interview:

> The typewriter keys, library slips, lists of people who work at CREEP, notepads on which Woodward scribbles his notes while he's phoning, pencils, pens, were all part of a conception of the absurdity of the weapons in this war story -- that what brought down perhaps the most powerful people on earth were these little slips of paper and pens and typewriter keys....If there was ever a picture which says on the most primitive level that the pen is mightier than the sword, this is it. Letters as bullets; typewriter keys as

> guns; little things becoming hugh in their power: it becomes those little things against those enormous buildings and against those people behind the television screen that you can't reach.

If it is indeed the case that "the pen is mightier than the sword," one should mention too that the film has been criticized for creating the impression that _only_ the Woodward-Bernstein pen was decisive during the early stages of the Watergate story -- that other newspapers and magazines are not given their due. The criticism is a valid one, though hardly devastating, and the film does make _some_ references to the concurrent work of other journalists.

Among the more successful aspects of _All the President's Men_ is the manner in which Pakula settles upon a visual style that is appropriate to the material and an effective statement in its own right. This is evident in the opening and closing sequences already discussed, and in the recurring contrasts between the glaring white starkness of the _Post_ newsroom (authentically replicated, down to the trash in wastebaskets) and the world of shadows and darkness in which the reporters frequently function -- Woodward in the underground parkade with Deep Throat, for example, or Bernstein interviewing a reluctant source who sits on dimly-lit stairs. The newsroom sequences, _Time_ reported, are

> bright, open, healthy. That, in turn, makes even more vivid the sequences in which Pakula exercises his special gift for suggesting menace through indirect visual statement. When the reporters leave their oasis of light to pursue their investigations, Washington -- that city of broad avenues and vistas -- becomes, as Pakula visualizes it, a dark and scary place. Its great public buildings loom up suddenly and oppressively out of the shadows, dominating, seeming to threaten the tiny figures of the ever-hustling newsmen. When, finally, they begin to penetrate the homes of potential informants, the material the reporters seek comes haltingly, fearfully, from people, who, even in familiar surroundings, seek to shelter themselves in dimness.

The light-dark contrast is supplemented by another visual motif that is equally in harmony with Pakula's "the pen is mightier than the sword" viewpoint: a visual emphasis on the enormity and impersonal nature of government. That point is dramatically exemplified in a justly celebrated shot of Woodward and Bernstein sifting through thousands of check-out slips in the Library of Congress: starting with the tiny slips of paper, the camera pulls up and away, until the sequence concludes with a dizzying ceiling viewpoint in which the two reporters and their boxes of paper are dwarfed by the massive architecture. Besides its metaphorical implications, the shot serves other functions simultaneously. In Pakula's words, it "gave me a chance to dramatize the endless time it takes to do these things, without being boring about it. It also gave me a sense of how tiny these figures are in terms of the enormity of the task, and the heroic job they're trying to achieve."

The most significant weakness of the film, and the last point we will consider here, is its failure to explore anything beyond the "heroic" dimensions of its major protagonists. Though Woodward and Bernstein "get a little devious now and then" -- as Post film critic Gary Arnold put it -- "invariably it's all in the line of duty. The movie has done a pretty thorough job of eliminating the incidents in the book that appeared to weigh upon their consciences, such as the grand jury caper..."[17] Interestingly, Pakula himself believes that the "reporters' ruthlessness" is communicated in the film and seems entirely unsentimental about their motivations -- i.e., he realizes that they are not interested in moral statements, they are committed to getting a story. Though there are sequences in the film which clearly point in that direction, it must be said that the overall impression is not one of ruthlessness or ethically questionable techniques. Whatever its strengths and weaknesses, a more typical impression would probably be that expressed by The New Yorker's Penelope Gilliatt: "It was the worst of times, but, because of the acts of some then uncelebrated and endangered people, says this film, it was the best of times."[18]

Nashville, directed by Robert Altman from a screenplay by Joan Tewsbury, is the last of the analytical films and without question the most complex. Above all else, the film is heavily impressionistic, so rich in meaning and nuance that -- more so than any other film in the sample -- no definitive interpretation of it is possible or desirable, and no story synopsis can begin to convey the wealth of connotations it contains. Viewing the film is, as Pauline Kael wrote in The New Yorker, "a constant discovery of overlapping connections." This is not to say, however, that those overlapping connections are inaccessible to analysis -- especially political analysis; indeed, Nashville's setting is, significantly enough, an imaginary 1976 Presidential primary campaign and the film is said to have been partly "inspired" by the Watergate scandal.[19]

Simply stated, Altman's film is about several days in the lives of twenty-four characters living in, and converging upon, the "home" of country and western music -- or, more precisely, the home of the country and western music industry. Of the twenty-four characters, eight are established performers: Haven Hamilton and Barbara-Jean, the reigning "king" and "queen" of the industry; Barbara-Jean's arch-rival and occasional replacement singer, Connie White; Tommy Brown, a successful black performer; Tom, Mary and Bill, a popular folk trio; and Linnea Reese, a white gospel singer. Those eight interact with one another, and with a second sub-set of characters -- non-performing relatives, acquaintances, and managerial personnel, including: Haven's mistress, Lady Pearl; Barbara-Jean's husband and manager, Barnett; Linnea's husband, Delbert, who is Haven's and Barbara-Jean's lawyer; and Haven's son, Bud, a young lawyer who helps manage his father's affairs.

Bud Hamilton is also part of a third sub-set of characters -- those who, pathetically in most cases, want to be performers but are not. These include: Albuquerque (a.k.a. Winifred), a dizzy, mini-skirted woman who sporadically leaves her husband, a farmer, to seek stardom in Nashville; Sueleen Gay, a waitress who vainly yearns to be a singer, despite a hopelessly flat, monotone voice; and Norman, chauffeur to the folk trio and an occasional songwriter.

Finally, there is a fourth set of characters -- the non-performers who have no musical ambitions, many of whom are, one way or another, outsiders. These include: Mr. Green, an elderly Nashville resident whose wife is seriously ill; Mr. Green's niece, Martha (a.k.a. "L.A. Joan"), a "groupie" who conspicuously hails from California; Sueleen Gay's loyal friend, Wade, a black dishwasher and short-order cook; Pfc. Glenn Kelly, a Vietnam veteran devoted to Barbara-Jean's protection; Albuquerque's husband, Star, a minor character notable for his utter loathing of country music; a mysterious "Tricycle Man" who appears at the fringes of many events in the film, riding a three-wheeled motor-bike and performing impressive but unspectacular feats of magic; Kenny Fraiser, an adolescent runaway whose character is not deeply defined, though vitally important at the film's conclusion; and Opal, a silly, cliché-prone interviewer who purportedly works for the B.B.C. and gives a running commentary, usually wrong-headed, on much of what is happening.

The twenty-fourth significant character in Nashville, and an important catalyst throughout, is John Triplette, a political advance man who is in Nashville to organize talent for a televised fund-raising concert in aid of the Presidential primary campaign of Hal Phillip Walker. The latter is Nashville's unseen, but -- thanks to an ubiquitous sound track -- often heard twenty-fifth principal character. Walker is running for the Presidency on the Replacement Party ticket, and his campaign logo consists of a stylized tree that is rooted in a U.S. map -- the top half of which consists of a band of stars, while the bottom half (the South) includes the roots of the tree. Walker's campaign slogan is "New Roots for the Nation," and his platform is a peculiar concoction of business-oriented populism.

Nashville is a particularly unconventional movie with respect to plot. On the one hand, it is relatively (but by no means entirely) uncluttered by many of the melodramatic events that typically constitute the details of a conventional story synopsis; for the most part, things do not "happen" in *Nashville* the way they "happen" in a James Bond movie -- or, for that matter in the vast majority of films we have considered so far. On the other hand, the film is so full of what someone once called "the poetry of everyday experience" that a sensible summary of it would be very lengthy indeed. In lieu of such a detailed treatment, we propose to quote in its entirety the story synopsis that appeared in the *Monthly Film Bulletin*, and to proceed then to the more important question of interpretation and analysis. The M.F.B. summary, which was very skeletal, went as follows:

> Under the management of John Triplette and local supporter Delbert Reece, the Replacement Party launches a campaign in Nashville, Tennessee, for its Presidential candidate Hal Phillip Walker. The organizers plan to open a large rally for Walker with a concert featuring the most popular entertainers in Nashville -- a task requiring considerable diplomacy as the music business is reluctant to show any political preferences. Approaches are made, however, to veteran stars Haven Hamilton and Barbara-Jean, who is currently recovering from one of her periodic collapses

> from exhaustion. As the campaign gathers momentum, Nashville's customary flood of visitors continues unceasingly, ranging from celebrities like Julie Christie and Elliott Gould to runaway Kenny Fraiser and scatterbrained country girl Albuquerque, on the run from the tedium of a rustic marriage. Gatecrashing at all levels is a garrulous English girl, Opal, claiming to represent the BBC and talking her way into all the Nashville events, including an Opry concert featuring the black singer Tommy Brown and Barbara-Jean's replacement and rival, Connie White. She is also an easy conquest for Tom Frank, insatiable member of the singing trio Bill, Tom and Mary, whose recent girls include Martha, a groupie too busy with boys to visit her aunt dying in hospital, and Mary. Tom's main target, however, is Delbert's wife Linnea, lead singer in a gospel choir; she eventually gives in to his persistent requests for a date and discovers without surprise that he phones the next girl as soon as she leaves his bed. Her husband, meanwhile, belatedly discovers that waitress Sueleen Gay (employed to strip at a fund-raising party) has no talent whatsoever, but manages to secure Barbara-Jean for the rally when she makes a complete mess of her return concert and her husband/manager Barnett has to promise the angry crowd a free show as compensation. But after Barbara-Jean's song, while she is taking a bow with Haven, Kenny draws a gun from his fiddle case and fires; the concert temporarily halts in confusion as the wounded stars are led away. The microphone is passed to Albuquerque and she seizes the opportunity of a lifetime.

It should be noted that the above synopsis is misleading with respect to the conclusion of the film. The "wounded stars" are not led away: Barbara-Jean, by our "reading" of the film, is dead -- an interpretation that is supported by material in the published screenplay. Haven Hamilton is wounded, and he is the one who, bleeding and in a state of shock, urges someone to sing and finally passes the microphone to Albuquerque.

Nashville is a multi-faceted celebration, satire, and burial of a particular American mythology, and an expression of apprehension about America's future. The film's politics ranges from the very obvious to the symbolic and obscure: its explicit political content includes all material pertaining to the Walker candidacy, the machinations of John Triplette, and the responses of the various characters to the Triplette-Walker political propositions; and its symbolic content embraces most of the meterial pertaining to Barbara-Jean, what she stands for, and the meaning of the apocalyptic assassination. In the final analysis, both kinds of content interpenetrate and complement one another, giving enhanced expression to the film's thematic preoccupation with rootlessness and replacement.

"Fellow taxpayers and stockholders in America," Walker's principal campaign speech begins. "On the first Tuesday in November we have to make some vital decisions about our management. Let me go directly to the point: I'm for doing some replacing." He appeals to the imputed "business sense" or more folksy "common sense" of his listeners, and argues that the answer to a heady assortment of political problems (world hunger, bureaucratic "red tape," housing shortages, the Congressional seniority system, and so on) lies in the replacement of "complicated lawyeristic remedies" with simpler solutions: "What this country needs is some one syllable answers." Walker's speech is riddled with rhetorical questions ("Does it make sense to let the petroleum giants increase their prices at will, adding to an already staggering profit, but tell the filling station owner in his khakis he can't charge one penny more?"), which communicates a sense of concern about issues without committing the candidate to very much in the way of "one syllable solutions." When he does get specific, his proposals seem more simple-minded than simple: he wants to remove lawyers from government, especially from Congress; abolish the electoral college; abolish the Congressional seniority system; and change the American national anthem. In the final analysis, Walker wants to replace the old with something new, simplistic, and uncertain; the "new roots" he promises seem shallow and insubstantial.

Walker's advance man, John Triplette, is the most visibly politically active person in the film. Courteous and deferent at first, Triplette organizes the climactic concert with consumate diplomatic skill. As he begins to acquire some psychological leverage, he is transformed --

almost imperceptably -- from polite outsider to ruthless manipulator, very much in control. Nowhere is his hypocrisy more evident than in his attitude towards the diminutive, ridiculously-toupeed Haven Hamilton, who is one moment the target of Triplette's smirking humor, backstage at the Grand Ole Opry, and the next moment offered Walker's assistance should he choose to run for Governor. ("Walker thinks you'd make a fine governor in this state...He thinks the people of Nashville love you. He knows they do.") The offer is conditional, of course, upon Haven's appearance at the Walker rally.

Among the subtleties of Triplette's character is the fact that his candidate is neither "bought" nor "sold" in the light of his ideas or policies. Instead, he is promoted and responded to in terms of individual self-interest. Thus, Haven is persuaded not by ideology and programs, but by the promise of a governorship; there is no pretense of a discussion about what Walker stands for, or whether Haven can support him in good conscience. The matter is handled similarly when Tom, Mary and Bill are approached. No one need wory about politics ("Don't care. Don't care about politics," Bill says emphatically), or about being a registered Democrat (Triplette himself is a registered Democrat). What must be considered is the trio's future, and the exposure the television show will give them, especially in syndication. Isn't Walker "a little crazy?" Mary wonders -- the closest anyone comes to a consideration of Walker's policies. Triplette falters only slightly before reassuring her: "Well, ah, they're all a little crazy, Mary. That's the name of the game." When Barbara-Jean's services are solicited, through her husband and manager, Barnett, the latter's response echoes Bill's: "No government. No politics. No nothin'." Though he clearly believes that Walker and Triplette are "full of it," Barnett too comes around, when it appears to be in the interests of Barbara-Jean's career -- to compensate and pacify her fans after her breakdown during an earlier concert. Here, then, is one of the film's many ironies: it is Walker who insists that "All of us are deeply involved in politics whether we know it or not, and whether we like it or not"; but Walker's man Triplette is appealing to those who profess exactly the kind of political indifference Walker challenges early in his speech; and Triplette's appeal is based on the self-interest of individuals, not on any apparent consideration of what is being "replaced" and what the replacement will be.

On a more symbolic level, with particular emphasis on Barbara-Jean and her music, Nashville reflects upon America's mythical roots -- at least in so far as those roots find expression in country and western music.

Barbara-Jean is the myth personified -- and is almost labelled as such when, during one shot of her at the airport, a jet airplane with the word "American" lettered on its side looms gigantically in the background of the picture. Though her songs tell of a longing for the past ("Momma and daddy raised me with lovin' care / They sacrificed, so I could have a better share...We were young then, we were together / We could bear floods and fire and bad weather..."), it is a past in which love, caring, and triumph over hardship are idyllically remembered. The little we know of her own life -- she has been working and supporting herself since childhood -- raises doubts about the myth, just as portly, overbearing Barnett contrasts sharply with the idealized "hard workin' cowboy man" of another of her songs. But Barbara-Jean celebrates this mythical past innocently, radiantly, and without malice or manipulation. If, as the film implies from time to time, politics and stardom are similar occupations, Barbara-Jean is the politician/performer as uncorrupted, idealistic victim -- worshipped by her constituent/fans, devoted to, and ultimately consumed by them. Like Haven Hamilton, but without his conceits and posturing, she has what screenwriter Joan Tewkesbury called "the ability to awaken people's hopes and dreams, allowing them to bask for those same few minutes in optimism."

Connie White is occasionally referred to in the film as Barbara-Jean's replacement singer, and in fact, she does replace Barbara-Jean during one of the several concert sequences. Hers is a different sensibility and temperment -- one that is most eloquently expressed during scenes in which she "tries on" various smiles before going on stage, snubs a star-struck Albuquerque, or glibly assures some children that any one of them could grow up to be President. If Barbara-Jean represents the uncorrupted, innocent expression of imagined roots, Connie White represents something less benign and more manipulative. And it is surely no coincidence that the adjective "replacement" describes both her status with respect to Barbara-Jean, as well as Hal Phillip Walker's political party. (There is even one scene in which we see a poster of Connie White with a Walker sticker affixed to it.) When Connie White replaces Barbara-Jean, we lose the latter's aching, but certain sense of a past -- and roots. While Barbara-Jean's songs speak of an idealized past and a mythical present, Connie White sings of uncertainty and rootlessness ("Well, I'd like to go to Memphis / but I don't know the way / and I'd like to tell you how I feel / but I don't know what to say..." "Rolling stone, rolling stone, gathers no moss / But neither does it gather any love.") Her cunning as a performer, and the rhetoric of her songs, complement the rhetoric of Walker's campaign and the deceit of his henchman.

Connie White seems clearly intended as a Walker surrogate.

At the same time, it must not be forgotten that Barbara-Jean is herself a symbolic "Presidential" figure, and her death is an expression of apprehension about what the political future will bring. ("Wonder what this year will bring," is the ominous, repetitive refrain of a background song as performers and audience assemble for the fateful concluding rally.) For Barbara-Jean may, as has been said of the assassinated Kennedys -- bitterly eulogized by a weeping Lady Pearl earlier in the film -- awaken hopes and dreams without being able to satisfy them. In the sequence leading to the assassination, while she extols the virtues of her idealized "Idaho Home," Kenny Fraiser listens intently to the words -- undone, perhaps, by the gap between what the song celebrates and what his own life has been. We know little about him, but it is enough. The presence of some Walker campaign literature in his car suggests that he may be very much taken with the Replacement Party candidate, or planning to kill him: possibly both. He has been boarding with Mr. Green, an obvious father figure, and comes to the climactic concert after attending Mrs. Geen's funeral -- the burial of a surrogate mother who is another representative of the past. Most importantly, we have heard him speak to his real mother via telephone and, it turns out, she is a grotesque parody of the maternal and domestic virtues which Barbara-Jean has conjured up: in her, love, tenderness and caring have given way to a suffocating possessiveness and an exasperating fussiness. Towards the end of the conversation Kenny disconnects his mother's call and, into the dead receiver, reciprocates the sentiments he wishes she had expressed: "I love you too, Mama, I really do. I'll see you soon." Finally, at the concert -- set, appropriately enough, in Nashville's lumber-and-plaster-of-Paris Parthenon -- the fabled past is destroyed by the troubled, rootless present. A star is consumed, and a star is born. With the mythical past having been exploded and the present in a state of flux, the future looks grimly uncertain.

Having made these general, and by no means exhaustive, comments regarding the interpretation of _Nashville_, it is worth noting that many of the published reviews of the film have tended to be much more impressionistic, eschewing in particular any effort to articulate the meaning of Kenny Fraiser's assassination of Barbara-Jean.[20] ("...might it, perhaps, be something to do with his mother?" wondered Philip Strick in the _Monthly Film Bulletin_.) In a lengthy and very useful set of interviews and comments in _Film Quarterly_, for example, Connie Byrne and William O. Lopez called the film "an immediate, multitudinous, non-authoritarian, rash, sophisticated, sweeping, cynical, affirmative smorgasbord of American life in the 1970's." Altman, they wrote.

> transmits a panorama of grandiose contradictions, vagaries, and confusions without sifting them through a rigid theoretical framework. He does not seem to start out with a comprehensible social philosophy which informs every element of the film and which in turn is supposed to clarify or inflame the audience's political attitudes. In fact, Altman relishes incomprehensible events and unsynthesizable conflicts.
>
> . . . .
>
> The acceptance of multi-layered face value, the openness to unreasonable experience, the celebration of non-dialectical, non-motivational, non-resolution comprise the essence of Altman's philosophical realism and political vagueness.

Among their more perceptive observations, Burns and Lopez note that those characters in the film who do seem in some way politically committed (Walker, Triplette, Opal), "are shown as confused, hypocritical, manipulative, absurd and downright evil."

In Sight and Sound, Jonathan Rosenbaum objected to Altman's concluding the film "with a veritable surplus of Significance after over 150 minutes of open sailing..." Keeping in mind that the film was intended to be much lengthier, Rosenbaum has deemed it

> work in progress, the unfolding of a

> narrative complex rather than its ultimate destination. Thus to stop the movie at a precise meaning -- and worse yet, a socio-political one -- is to rob it of its complexity and consign it to the same dustbin of platitudes that Opal and Hal Phillips (sic) Walker both specialize in accumulating.

At the same time, Rosenbaum has rightly defended the film against those who viewed it as a "put-down" of Nashville. Bill Sherman wrote in Take One, for example, that the film is condescending and superficial, and claimed that it "sneers at human beings and at life, and is a nasty piece of work...." "In point of fact," wrote Rosenbaum, "the film celebrates as much as it ridicules -- often doing both at the same time -- while giving both its brilliant cast and its audience too much elbow room to allow for any overriding thesis."

Both of the New Yorker critics, Pauline Kael and Penelope Gilliatt, analyzed the film. "The songs are the story being told," wrote Ms. Kael, who was particularly attentive to the musical and metaphoric aspects of the movie:

> Could there be a city with wilder metaphoric overtones than Nashville, the Hollywood of the C. & W. recording industry, the center of fundamentalist music and pop success?...[T]he songs tell you that although you've failed and you've lived a terrible, degrading life, there's a place to come home to, and that's where you belong. Even the

> saddest song is meant to be reassuring to its audience: the insights never go beyond common poverty, job troubles, and heartaches, the the music never rises to a level that would require the audience to reinterpret its experience. Country stars are symbolic ordinary figures. In this, they're more like political demagogues than artists.

Walker's slogan, "New Roots for the Nation," is "a great slogan for the South," wrote Ms. Kael, "since country music is about a longing for roots that don't exist." And Barbara-Jean is the film's "one tragic character: her art comes from her belief in imaginary roots."

Penelope Gilliat also commented on country and western music, which, she said, "markets to unrooted people a false impression of belonging to the historic." Nashville

> is a film about fatuous words parading as home truths, about the drive to succeed substituting for love of work, about surfaces passing themselves off as bedrock, about raw and buffeted people conning themselves into thinking they are bastions supported by history. What history? We see the edifice that caused Nashville to be called "The Athens of the South": a confection of slightly Greek columns, put up in the thirties.

Ms. Gilliatt was also critical of Altman for ending the film with "a climax that -- coming as it does after a deliberately incohate mass of footage specifically designed to explore character rather than to expound plot -- seems aesthetically false." The film, she wrote, "will be remembered and honored less for its intellectual content than for its technical and emotional reach." Perhaps it will be remembered on both counts.

Concluding observations

With the discussion and analysis of the foregoing fifteen films, we have concluded the classification and film-by-film consideration of our entire sample of contemporary commercial cinema. The reader will recall that a five-category classification system had been initially proposed, as a working basis for grouping and analyzing the content of ninety feature-length films. Category one consisted of twenty-eight films of minimal political interest, which were of political interest only in so far as some of them included incidental politically-relevant content that was never developed beyond the level of hints, labels, and cartoon caricatures. Category two consisted of eleven social stratum or sub-culture movies, which typically eschewed explicit political content, but which had implicit political relevance by virtue of their dramatization of the conditions or life-styles of identifiable ethnic, cultural, racial, or other social strata. In category three, there were twenty-six melodramas with politically interesting sub-plots or implications. Films in that category included more or less substantial politically-interesting sub-plots, though the political content was of a highly melodramatic nature and was unambiguously subservient to other plot elements.

The ten films in our fourth category were designated as issue or message movies, and, in varying degrees, each entailed a clearly articulated presentation of a single social issue, on which a stand was taken or point of view presented. The fifteen films in our fifth category were, of course, movies which included complex social and political analysis, and had as a central aspect of their content a view of individuals that emphasized political relationships and values; political and politically-relevant content in this set of films was typically dramatized in a way that was complex, multi-faceted, and functioning on more than one level of meaning.

The principal strength of any useful classification system -- the simplification of a complex array of data -- is also its most telling weakness. In attempting to construe two or more elements as being somehow the same, it is always necessary to discount their differences, and to disregard their unique features. In the detailed, but by no means exhaustive discussion of each of the analytical films, it should be apparent that each constitutes an individual, complex set of statements, themes, visions, and so on; in that respect, they hardly lend themselves to the kind of summarizing generalizations that were made about sets and sub-sets of films in the lesser categories. Nonetheless, there are some remarkably clear threads running throughout most of the analytical films and, though they should not obscure each film's unique values, those common denominators are certainly worth exploring.

The analytical films are about men against systems: that is the dominant theme of the entire fifteen-film set, and it is manifest in most of the individual movies which constitute the category. With a few exceptions and qualifications, these are stories about individuals buffeted, harassed, or at the very least seriously bothered by oppressively systemic forces: authoritarian institutions and values, in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and The Devil is a Woman; an inverted, totalitarian utopia, in A Boy and His Dog; King and nobility in Robin and Marian; entire social structures in Barry Lyndon and Swept Away...; the state itself in Special Section; a corrupt system of criminal law and justice in Hustle; the contemporary urban environment and its attendant pressures, in Dog Day Afternoon and Taxi Driver; amoral or malevolent state agencies in The Killer Elite and Three Days of the Condor; and a corrupt political regime, in All the President's Man. Less obviously fitting this pattern are The

Man Who Would Be King and Nashville -- though it should be remembered that in the former, Dravot and Carnehan are obviously creatures of Imperial Britain and attempt to transcend its limitations in a society that Danny, in particular, fatally misunderstands. In Nashville, the systemic forces are comprised of a complex social fabric -- including an aggregation of myths -- rather than more readily identifiable institutions.

It is crucial to realize here that we are not talking about the facile, rhetorical "System" that was so vilified in youth-oriented movies of the late nineteen-sixties. Nor are we speaking of the occasional insubstantial reference to "the System" that occurred in some of the melodramas or films of minimal political interest. When we speak of the analytical films with reference to systems, the point is not that they talk about or make statements about systems -- though there are occasional explicit references to the term, especially in The Killer Elite. The point is, rather, that they are about systems, which may or may not be explicitly identified, but which are clearly shown to be impinging upon major protagonists, usually in an unfavorable way. In some respects, of course, the theme of men-in-systems appears built into our definition of analytical films, by virtue of our concern with political relationships and values; thus, it should come as no surprise that we have "discovered" the theme in most of the 15 films that are included in the category. What is unexpected, and entirely independent of our definition, is the idea of men against systems -- systemic factors as determinants of some of the evil things men do, as in Dog Day Afternoon and Barry Lyndon, and, more often, systemic factors constituting the ultimate problem that has to be overcome or side-stepped, as in Hustle, Swept Away..., Barry Lyndon and others. With the arguable exception of All the President's Men, these films rarely give the impression that once a particular villain has been dispatched, or once a particular problem or frustration has been overcome, everything will be fine. In all of the films -- with some fluctuations in credibility and conviction -- villains, problems, frustrations, and so on, are obviously meant to be representative or symptomatic of something larger, more pervasive, and more durable than the individual protagonists who are tormented by it.

Thus, in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and The Devil Is a Woman, the oppressive regimes of Nurse Ratched and Sister Geraldine are sustained -- even after the characters with whom we have identified have either left or been destroyed. In Robin and Marian, Robin Hood and many of those whom he championed are finally killed by the enduring forces he had fought. Vic's departure in A Boy and His Dog leaves the "State of Topeka, Kansas" unquestionably intact. Mutilated and dejected, Barry Lyndon is relegated to his "proper sphere" in an intransigent social order. Danny Dravot and his companion are brought low in The Man Who Would Be King, when a primitive social order asserts itself against their blasphemous posturings. The state is murderously triumphant over innocent individuals in Special Section, and we are reminded that the wrongdoers were never punished. In Swept Away..., Genarino and Rafaella are unable to sustain a socially "unnatural" relationship upon their return to civilized society. An "ideal of social order" prevails against an anarchic, troubled Sonny in Dog Day Afternoon. Phil Gaines scores a tentative, atypical and -- significantly -- illegal victory for the "nobodies" in Hustle, before he himself is killed. In Taxi Driver, Travis Bickel has been hailed as a hero, but he cruises the same streets of filth and vermin, and we know that he is "all right" only for a time. For different reasons, and with different expectations, Joe Turner and Mike Locken -- in Three Days of the Condor and The Killer Elite -- leave amoral or corrupt institutions which then remain intact. Nashville, of course, is less easy to characterize in this context, but it seems fair to say that its conclusion is at best grimly apprehensive, and at worst profoundly pessimistic about the future. Only All the President's Men depicts protagonists who are unambiguously triumphant against systemic forces. And curiously, we do not actually see them victorious; we're told about it in an epilog. Nixon et al. are entrenched throughout the dramatized portions of the film.

An obvious handmaiden of the men-against-systems theme is the use of major characters who are, by and large, vulnerable, troubled, or disadvantaged outsiders relative to the social systems in which they function. There are few unambiguously heroic figures among the principal protagonists in this set of films -- i.e., few strong, confident, successful, positively-depicted individuals who seize control of situations and triumph over a variety of obstacles before the final reel is done. Instead, the "heroes" of the analytical films include: a maladjusted asylum inmate (Cuckoo's Nest); a guilt-ridden, disillusioned legendary figure (Robin and Marian); the helpless, innocent victims of Special Section; a dour, often disagreeable social climber (Barry Lyndon); a charming but pathetic overreacher (The Man Who Would Be King); a shrill, often ludicrous proletarian (Swept Away...); an insecure, sentimental policeman (Hustle); a volatile, bisexual bank robber (Dog Day Afternoon); a powerless, psychotically lonely urban misfit (Taxi Driver); and two C.I.A. Employees (The Killer Elite and Three Days of the Condor) who, though they overcome proximate difficulties, leave the agency after personal disillusionment, and with a great deal of uncertainty about their future prospects. The two Washington Post reporters in All the President's Men are closer to the traditional heroic mold than most of the other characters we have discussed, but it should be noted that they are certainly handicapped outsiders relative to the forces they are up against. Nashville, of course, has no "heroes" or "heroines" in the traditional sense, but its major symbolic figure, Barbara-Jean, is the very essence of vulnerability.

Ironically, though the major protagonists in most of the analytical films deviate so conspicuously from more conventional notions of the heroic -- at least in commercial films -- several of the movies in this set include a self-conscious reflection on ideals of heroism. This is most clearly apparent in Robin and Marian, Hustle, and The Killer Elite, and there are subtler traces of it in The Man Who Would Be King, Taxi Driver, and A Boy and His Dog. Closely related to this, and more consistently evident, is a thematic concern with betrayed, corrupted, or perverted ideals. That theme is most ostentatious, of course, in Robin and Marian, Hustle, Three Days of the Condor, and -- in a more substantial and complex fashion -- Nashville. But it appears too in The Killer Elite, The Man Who Would Be King, Taxi Driver, and A Boy and His Dog. Naturally, we get a glimpse of the "genuine article" in All the

President's Men, especially in the scenes depicting Hugh Sloan and the "Creep" bookkeeper.

Finally, and at the risk of considerable oversimplification, one can distill from the material in this chapter a very general, "typical" plot summary. A vulnerable and troubled individual, probably an outsider, comes to grips with problems, frustrations, and obstacles that appear to extend beyond the immediate characters or situations at the dramatic core of the film. The individual is either destroyed by the systemic forces against which he is pitted, or he reaches an uneasy and uncertain truce -- a partial victory, perhaps. Enroute to this outcome, which almost always involves violence, he may have cause to reflect upon his own values and ideals, and those which are dominant -- or presumed to be dominant -- in the society in which he must function.

Having concluded our discussion of the ninety films examined in this study, we shall proceed next to an overview of the sample -- an overview that will cut across the five categories by emphasizing those films in which politicians or aspiring politicians are depicted. Further to this, we shall briefly examine differences between the British and American films in the sample, and attempt to place the American films in some kind of historical context. Throughout that analysis -- and throughout our subsequent discussion of the implications of the research -- we shall return to the analytical films and to some of the conclusions reached in the present chapter.

ENDNOTES

1. It may be recalled that in our treatment of the four lesser categories in this classification system, a distinction was made between "primary" and "secondary" instances of the category in question -- i.e., between those films that seemed to best exemplify a category and those which were borderline cases or "bad fits." Since the analytical films are all primary examples almost by definition, we have abandoned the primary-secondary distinction within the body of this chapter. For the record, however, it is worth noting that such a distinction would probably involve the designation of the following films as the best examples of the analytical category: _One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest_, _Barry Lyndon_, _The Man Who Would Be King_, _Swept Away..._, _Taxi Driver_, _All the President's Men_, and _Nashville._ Then, in roughly descending order of importance, come the lesser examples: _Special Section_, _Dog Day Afternoon_, _The Killer Elite_, _Three Days of the Condor_, _Robin and Marian_, _Hustle_, _A Boy and His Dog_, and _The Devil Is a Woman_.

2. In a _New Times_ review of three books about madness, Geoffrey Wolff critically reported the following as the "message" of the film version of _Cuckoo's Nest_: "Society is the enemy of sanity to the extent that society represses and alters the impulses of the imagination as they are found in man's unfettered, natural, rational state, and if Nurse Ratched would only leave her wards to their own devices, the lame would throw down their crutches and walk again, free men, each according to the dictates of his own odd health." (_New Times_, March 5, 1976.)

3. Quoted in "In the Picture," _Sight and Sound_, Vol. 44 (4), 1975, p.216.

4. Consider, for example, this brief excerpt about the installation of controls: "Sometimes a guy goes over for an installation, leaves the ward mean and mad and snapping at the whole world and comes back a few weeks later with black-and-blue eyes like he had been in a fist-fight, and he is the sweetest, nicest, best-behaved thing you ever saw. He will maybe even go home in a month or two, a hat pulled low over the face of a sleepwalker wandering around in a simple, happy dream. A success, they say, but I say he's just another robot for the Combine and might be better off as a failure...." Ken Kesey, _One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest_ (New York: New American Library, 1962), p.20.

5. Harlan Ellison's "A Boy and His Dog" is reprinted in Charles William Sullivan, III, As Tomorrow Becomes Today (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp. 186-219. A great deal of the film's political content is not evident in Ellison's original story, though Ellison has claimed that his original screenplay was more "revolutionary" than what was filmed by L. Q. Jones. Nonetheless, he seems happy with the film, in spite of Jones' "right-wing" inclinations. See: Steve Swires, "I Have No Wings and I Must Fly," Take One, Vol. 5(4), 1976, pp. 7-11.

6. According to Ellison, L. Q. Jones is "like John Wayne in that he's ruggedly individual and anarchistic and fascistic..." See Swires, Ibid., p. 8.

7. In Thackeray's novel, The Memoirs of Barry Lyndon (London: Futura Publications, 1974) the quoted material appears very inconspicuously early in the narrative (page seven of the above edition). Kubrick used the quote as a very ostentatious coda for the film -- thereby commenting upon and coloring everything that went before it. The novel, one should note, was told in the first person singular, and its hero -- an unabashedly egoistic, unethical braggart -- was almost instantly dislikable; his downfall is more cheerfully anticipated and experienced. The film, of course, is narrated in the third person and Barry Lyndon is a more morose and pathetic character. The tone of the narration is often one of smug, heartless satisfaction, and insufferable, ponderous moralizing. It might be said that while the novel is related from Barry's point of view, the film is narrated from the point of view of the social class towards which he aspires. The novel and the film contrast sharply in several other respects as well.

8. To say that Kipling's story was "fleshed out" by Huston and Gladys Hill is to understate the case. In Film Comment, Vol. 12(1), 1976, Brendan Gill wrote the following: "...almost the first praise to be spoken of the movie version of 'The Man Who Would Be King' is that it is greatly superior to the original. The screenplay...is well-nigh perfect of its kind -- a model not merely of necessary expansion (Kipling's story is only a few thousand words long) but of aesthetic enhancement as well. Simply as a tale well told, it is worth study; novelists can learn from it as readily as screenwriters."

9. Newsweek's Jack Kroll, for example, observed that Special Section's "universal significance should escape

no one, Americans least of all." In Watergate, wrote Kroll, "Americans only recently saw a real-life melodrama involving the creation of special sections that would bypass the system. And they were introduced to a dramatis personae who had to rationalize the same kind of problem. In the end, almost all Americans had to agree that the issues were the simplest ones of law and conscience." (Newsweek, Dec. 15, 1975.)

10. Lina Wertmuller was at the centre of a great storm of critical controversy in 1976, following the North American release of several of her films. Wertmuller was variously hailed as a genius of the cinema, ranking with talents as diverse as Chaplin and Fellini, and denounced as a heavyhanded, tasteless pretender. Extreme opinions were the rule. For side-by-side conflicting viewpoints, see: "The Italian Aristophanes?" by Diane Jacobs, and "The Sophists' Norman Lear?" by Brooks Riley, in *Film Comment* Vol. 12 (2), 1976.

11. Aldrich's recent films are discussed and contrasted with one another and with his earlier work, in Richard Combs, "Worlds Apart: Aldrich Since the Dirty Dozen," *Sight and Sound*, Vol 45 (2), 1976. Aldrich himself is interviewed and defended as a "left-wing director" in: "I Can't Get Jimmy Carter to See My Movie! -- Robert Aldrich talks with Stuart Byron," *Film Comment*, Vol. 13 (2), 1977. Aldrich claims that his "indelible trademark is my affection for the struggle to regain self-esteem. Now, the likelihood of doing that is remote. Still, it is the costs that make it into a gallant struggle."

12. The film version of *Dog Day Afternoon* "followed the facts rather closely," according to an apparently authoritative article in *Playboy*, August 1976. "Dog Day Aftermath," by Cliff Jahr, is -- as its title implies -- a follow-up to the events depicted in the film. The substance of the article is evident in its subheading: "the true story of the real bank robber who went to prison, was gang-raped, forgotten and fleeced by Hollywood."

13. For contrasting interpretations of *Taxi Driver*, see Pauline Kael's highly favorable review in *The New Yorker*, Feb. 9, 1976; and an extremely negative -- but very well-documented -- viewpoint by Patricia Patterson and Manny Farber. "The Power and the Gory," *Film Comment*, Vol. 12 (3), 1976.

14. Interestingly, Schrader himself has discussed the

Bickle character and his violent outburst in the context of displaced aggression: "Long ago Pauline Kael asked me why I wrote about this character, what it had to do with me. I said, 'It is me without any brains.' It's the same need to escape, to break through, that drives a script in my case -- a real need to triumph over the system. Now I live pretty much the way I want, get paid for it, work when I want, get a certain amount of respect, and so I have beaten the system. If I was everybody's pawn, if I was Travis Bickle, the triumph would have to take another course, probably a violent one." Schrader was interviewed at length by Richard Thompson, for Film Comment, Vol. 12 (2), 1976.

15. Nigel Andrews, "Sam Peckinpah: the Survivor and the Individual", Sight and Sound, Vol. 42 (2), 1973.

16. Ms. Kael's review of The Killer Elite appeared in the January 12, 1976, New Yorker and is one of the strangest she has written. The film, she wrote, "isn't about C.I.A.-sponsored assassinations -- it's about the blood of a poet." The poet, of course, is Peckinpah, and Ms. Kael's review is deeply rooted in her admiration and empathy for him, especially with regard to his difficulties with the major American film studios. Of the battleship confrontation between Locken and the would-be assassins, for example, she wrote the following: "Wrapped up in their cult garb so we can't tell one from the other, the darting killers, seen in those slow-motion fast cuts, are exactly like Peckinpah's descriptions of the teeming mediocrities, jackals, hangers-on, and just plain killers that Hollywood is full of."

    For all her idiosyncracies, Kael too has recognized Peckinpah's dominant theme. The story, she said, "is used as a mere framework for a compressed, almost abstract fantasy on the subject of selling yourself yet trying to hang on to a piece of yourself...This picture is about survival."

17. Gary Arnold's review of All the President's Men appeared in the Washington Post, April 4, 1976. The "grand jury" caper alluded to is the attempt by Woodward and Bernstein to interview members of the Watergate grand jury -- in which event the juror or jurors would have been enticed to violate an oath of secrecy. The incident is described in Bernstein and Woodward, All the President's Men (New York: Warner Paperback Library, 1975), pp. 232-237 and 248-250.

The grand jury incident does not occur during the period covered by the film -- another reason, no doubt, why Arnold was critical of the "crucial misjudgment" involved in terminating the film roughly two-thirds of the way through the material included in the book. It appears, however, that that decision was not completely whimsical: Redford is reported to have become interested in the story when Woodward and Bernstein were at their lowest ebb (Time, March 29, 1976), and may have perceived the Haldeman fiasco as more of a climax than it really was. Pakula says the teletype "update" material was added after the first preview of the film. See Film Comment, Vol. 12 (5), 1976.

18. Given the varying tastes of film critics, All the President's Men was surprisingly well received by most. Interesting exceptions were Canadian critics Doug Fetherling, in Canadian Forum (June-July 1976), and Marshall Delaney -- a.k.a. Robert Fulford -- in Saturday Night (June, 1976). Referring to the film's director as "Paul Paluka," Fetherling called it a "nice liberal movie" and a "revisionist distortion." The distortion, he wrote, was that "it leaves one with the impression that is (sic) was the Washington Post that brought down Nixon instead of the establishment that pulls the strings of that publication and indeed those of all the big media...;Nixon's option was dropped by those who had picked it up originally, by the conservatives who are so conservative that they still believe in the letter of the Constitution rather than the spirit of it."

Delaney-Fulford insisted that "the cynical and lazy reporters in The Front Page bear more relationship to the real journalists I've met than anyone who appears in All the President's Men." The film, claimed Delaney, was a fantasy: "That this fantasy is based on fact -- that Woodward and Bernstein actually did work hard at their research, and helped bring down Nixon -- makes it no less a fantasy. As any newspaperman can testify, Woodward and Bernstein are freaks in the newspaper business, once-in-a-century curiosities."

19. Nashville is extensively considered in the excellent "interview 'documentary'" that appeared in Film Quarterly, Vol. 29 (2), 1975-76. According to Joan Tewkesbury, "When I turned the screenplay in, Watergate broke and we started adding characters then. My screenplay did not have a political line." Hal Phillip Walker, she adds, was not one of her original characters. "He was added with the break of Watergate, along with the

Replacement Party."

20. One of the best and most coherent interpretations of Nashville was by Bill Beard, in the Edmonton Film Society's occasional publication, Film Edmonton (1976 issue). Beard concentrated on Altman's contrasts between "city" and "country" characters and the values they represent. In many ways, however, his interpretation of the film is consistent with the one we have presented.

Altman himself has been only sporadically and moderately helpful when asked about the "meaning" of the film. He has been a little specific on occasion, but a more typical attitude is the one he expressed to a Playboy interviewer (August, 1976): "Many people want to know exactly what it is they're supposed to think. Well, my message is that I'm not going to do their work for them." And elsewhere, in the same interview: "I'm not interested in analyzing myself...Things come out of me only when I relax and let them come as an unconscious, emotional expression rather than an intellectual expression."

CHAPTER FIVE

POLITICAL CONTENT IN COMMERCIAL FILMS: OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSIONS

> "His radicalism is of the vaguest kind, and yet one always knows that it is there. That is the difference between being a moralist and a politician. He has no constructive suggestions, not even a clear grasp of the nature of the society he is attacking, only an emotional perception that something is wrong."
>
> -- George Orwell on Charles Dickens[1]

Introduction

In documenting the political content of ninety commercial films, the fundamental question to which we addressed ourselves was a deceptively simple one: "What is in here of political interest?" We began with a necessarily broad notion of what political content was and attempted to set parameters around the concept -- and bring order to our sample -- by grouping films together within five categories. Each category was felt to represent a particular mode and level of political relevance, beginning with films of minimal political interest, proceeding then to three categories of intermediate interest -- social stratum or sub-culture movies, melodramas with politically interesting sub-plots or implications, and message movies -- and concluding with a set of fifteen films which transcended the intermediate genres and were of sufficient interest and complexity to be deemed analytical.

The analytical films, it was suggested, were typified by a "men against systems" theme and featured embattled, reflective, uncertain heroes attempting to come to terms with oppressive, pervasive systemic forces that, in most cases, seemed to prevail even when the hero was able to successfully overcome the proximate source of frustration or danger. The message movies, we argued, were characterized by a dominant mood of apprehensiveness -- about fascist political movements, specific institutions of the state, and the shortcomings of legal systems -- and typically presented a clearly identifiable point of view that was articulated without complexity or depth. The melodramas seemed to fall into two broad sub-categories: films of crime and detection, which were characterized by an "anti-establishment" tone, a tendency to empathize with outlaws rather than lawmen, and a tendency to empathize with the poor rather than the rich; and films of international intrigue, in which "establishment" heroes did battle with international villains of incorrigibly violent political persuasions. The social stratum or sub-culture movies characteristically conveyed a mood of social deprivation -- a sense of hardship, social immobility, and limited options -- but generally avoided identifying political causes or solutions.

Films of minimal political interest, or course, were typified by the occasional use of politically relevant hints and labels, and by the depiction of gross caricatures -- usually villains -- of obvious and superficial political interest. This being the largest category in the sample, it is worth acknowledging here the argument that, in a sense, virtually _every_ film can be regarded as political, a point made by Raymond Durgnat in _A Mirror for England_[2] and by Furhammar and Isaksson in Politics and Film:

> Cecil B. DeMille felt that Hollywood cinema (of the 'unpolitical' variety) offered an excellent method of disseminating information about American thought and the American way of life. President Sukarno is said to have stated that Hollywood films form the most efficient political cinema, as they keep the masses away from politics. Others, again, have suggested that Hollywood paves the way for revolution in the developing countries by revealing most clearly the great gulf that exists globally between prosperity and poverty. It is hard to dismiss any one of these ideas.[3]

It is indeed "hard to dismiss" any one of those ideas, not just with respect to films of little apparent political interest, but with respect to all of the films we have discussed. One must emphasize, however, that such propositions, like so many about the effects of films, are more easily stated than documented. They do serve to remind us, perhaps, of the importance of contextual factors in the ultimate assessment of political content in films. Thus, the depiction of a corrupt policeman might be regarded as a routine aspect of American commercial releases -- of minor political interest only; the same kind of content in, say, an Egyptian film would be very political indeed;[4] and the very assumption that police corruption is a routine aspect of American films and of little political interest is itself of some significance.

Having very briefly summarized some of our conclusions about the various categories of films, we now propose to examine the question of politics and film in a broader fashion. The first part of the chapter will be "date-based" in the sense that we shall discuss research findings that cut across categories--focusing principally on the depiction of individuals in, or aspiring to, positions of political power, and attempting to place our research in the historical context of the mid-seventies. The second part of the chapter will consist of a speculative discussion of the implications of the research in terms of the way we view commercial films and the way commercial films may or may not affect audiences. When appropriate, we shall make references to the findings, opinions, and theoretical speculations of other students of film, with a view to pointing out where some material is short-sighted and out of date, and where some of it contains insights that are particularly well-suited to a less limited view of the commercial cinema -- less limited because a more realistic notion of politics is emphasized, and a more appropriate sense of the cinema experience is articulated.

Politicians and politics

The first observation one must make about the depiction of politicians in the films analyzed is that politicians are held in very low regard. In fact, there is simply no other sub-set of characters who are portrayed in such a consistently negative, and sometimes ferocious, fashion. The extent of this state of disrepute will be evident in the following capsule descriptions:

> All the President's Men -- this, of course, is the quintessential political corruption film. Of the major political figures depicted, only Hugh Sloan emerges as a man of some integrity, and even he has to be prodded, to some extent, by his wife. Democratic candidate, Senator George McGovern is shown in some TV footage, muddling through some of the lower points of his campaign.
>
> Breakheart Pass -- an exasperating Governor, John Fairchild, obstructs the normal operation of an army train and is ultimately unmasked as a key figure in a conspiracy to steal and murder.
>
> Call Him Mr. Shatter -- General M'Goya, the assassinated president of a fictitious African country, is deeply implicated in

drug dealing. M'Goya's assassin and successor is his own brother, whose nefarious political ambitions require that someone else be blamed and executed.

Dolemite -- "Mr. Big," the arch-villain, is a thoroughly corrupt politician/mobster, the Mayor of Chicago.

It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time -- Sinclair Burton, a mayoralty candidate, is corruptly involved with the owner of a construction company: "It's the duty of the politician to respond to the wishes of the people -- particularly if they're the right people."

The Killer Elite -- the endangered Asian politician seems to be a genuinely idealistic liberal democrat, but one of the clear themes of the film is a denunciation of all "power systems," America's in particular.

The Legend of Earl Durand -- Earl's nemesis, Jack McQueen, successfully campaigns for Sheriff; he is inflexible, deceitful, and corrupt.

Mahogany -- aldermanic (and later congressional) candidate Brian Walker is the only unambiguously selfless political candidate in the sample. Still, he is an outsider fighting against corruption that is pervasive enough to be regarded as "normal".

Nashville -- John Triplette, Hal Phillip Walker's advance man, is the definitive screen portrait of the politician as shrewd, charming, unprincipled manipulator. Walker himself, though some aspects of his program are foolish and simple-minded, is a more ambiguous figure.

The Pick-up -- an obnoxious, transparently hypocritical Senator appears in two sequences of the film; he is ready to assume any position on any issue, depending on the disposition of the prospective voter.

> Special Section -- the major political figure is the Minister of the Interior, the creator of the abominable "Special Section." Other political figures are portrayed in a more favorable light, but all are ultimately self-serving, ineffectual, cowardly, and unreasonably responsive to patriotic appeals.

> Taxi Driver -- Senator Charles Palantine, who successfully campaigns for the Presidential nomination of an unnamed political party, is all good looks, charm, and empty populist rhetoric. He is sold like mouthwash.

As always, in the discussion of films, the mere description of a character does not tell the whole story, nor does it adequately convey the greater subtleties of some of the films under consideration. The mood of a film such as Taxi Driver, for example, suggests a far deeper sense of political indifference and alienation than anything one would gather from a capsule summary of Palantine's role, or that of Betsy, the campaign worker with whom Travis Bickel has a flirtation. There is cynicism about men in power that permeates films such as The Killer Elite and Three Days of the Condor and rather overwhelms the former's treatment of the idealistic, courageous politician, and the latter's ostensible faith in the New York Times.

We have seen, too, that there are other films in the sample in which no elected or campaigning politicians appear, but which exhibit a pessimism about politicians and political institutions, and a sense of frustration and impotence about what an individual can do about them. Thus, a film such as Hustle clearly implies the bankruptcy of American political institutions, with the values, preferences, and interests of "important" people prevailing over those of the hard-working, disillusioned, "ordinary" taxpayers. Just as clearly, widespread corruption in government is a crucial assumption of Abduction. The state itself is a source of great unease in most of the message movies -- The Secret being a particularly good example. Unflattering references to political figures also occur in a more casual, incidental manner in a variety of films, ranging from those of great warmth and humanity, such as Lies My Father Told Me ("What politician does he have to pay off to get out of this?"), to the crudely satirical, such as Whiffs ("The only time we delouse the city is on election day"). Italian Social Democrats, of course, are objects of great scorn and ridicule throughout Swept Away.

Even in films with non-contemporary settings, men in power fare badly. In Barry Lyndon, power is ascribed rather than merited, and lesser mortals are shown as pawns in a game contested by elites. The narrator of the film, after describing the peasants and pick-pockets who comprise the English army, sarcastically chides those who dream about the glory of war: "It is with these sad instruments that your great warriors and kings have been doing their murderous work in the world." Great warriors and kings fare no better in Robin and Marian (which at times seems to make pointed references to another Richard, more recently dethroned), and, in a more restrained view, they are merely pathetic and foolish in The Man Who Would be King. "The Committee," the sinister guardians of Topeka in A Boy and His Dog, seems cut from the same metaphorical cloth as Richard and his henchmen in Robin and Marian. And political figures are foolish or sinister in Royal Flash, greedy and hypocritical in The Master Gunfighter.

Bluntly stated, and at the risk of some distortion, the image of men in power that prevails in many of the films sampled is strikingly Lasswellian:[5] they are almost always motivated by private interests, and their motives are typically clothed in the rhetoric of concern for the public interest. It is important to realize that, for the most part, this rhetoric of concern is precisely that -- vaguely populist, broadly appealing, ostensibly sincere, and patently insubstantial. In Lasswell's famous summation, of course, the transition from private motives to the public interest was mediated by the psychological processes of displacement and rationalization: private motives were displaced onto public objects and rationalized in terms of the public interest. The notions of displacement and rationalization, however, seem too subtle to be attributed to most movie politicians, implying, as they do, processes that are not necessarily willful and conscious. The overall impression of political figures that emerges here is a much cruder version of Lasswell's hypothesis: the mediating factors are absent, and a concern for the public interest is used in a cool, calculated way to masquerade blatant self-aggrandizement. It is true nonetheless, that this self-aggrandizement is characterized differently in different films. In films as diverse as _It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time_, _Breakheart Pass_, _All the President's Men_, _Dolemite_ and _Hustle_, political figures are openly, or by implication, corruptly self-serving. In films like _Nashville_ and _Taxi Driver_, however, outright corruption is not alleged -- the principal political figures are self-serving in a manipulative, but not in an illegal way.

Closely related to this dismal view of men in power is, overtly or by implication, a critical view of electoral politics. This perspective is most crudely expressed in _Dolemite_, when the criminal mayor, who is widely believed to have done "so much for black people," shows the palms of his hands to his constituents and assures them, "When you go to the polls again, I want you to know that these will still be clean." His electoral success, at the very least, implies a great deal of public gullibility. A less sweeping and more credible criticism is evident in the successful "mouthwash" approach to

Palantine's candidacy in Taxi Driver and in the successful efforts of Walker and his advance man in Nashville. In the latter film, even the metaphorical implications imply a criticism of electoral politics -- a point Altman himself has acknowledged in a Film Quarterly interview: "The whole point of making the political analogies to the country-western stars is the fact that people don't listen... it's a popularity contest. You take somebody and put them in a voting booth and what the hell are they supposed to know? How do you know if Gene McCarthy is for real or if he is a jerk? So what you really have is the majority of people constantly voting against something, even if it's just a new idea."

If the point of the whole exercise is a "popularity contest," of what consequence are political programs or platforms? Very little, it would seem. For the principal characters in Nashville, Hal Phillip Walker's platform -- the most well defined in all the films sampled -- seems irrelevant, though he appears to have won some primaries on the strength of it.[6] In Taxi Driver, we have seen, Palantine is running on a slogan and an image, though his "mandatory welfare program" is mentioned as an issue. Significantly, Travis Bickel allows that the latter is a good program, while acknowledging complete ignorance of its substance. Elsewhere, programs and slogans perversely camouflage the real politics of the person in question.

The mayor in Dolemite is ostensibly a champion of blacks, but in reality a murderer and a racist. The candidate in It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time is chairman of a committee to preserve historical buildings, but he is really working hand-in-glove with developers. The law and order candidates in The Legend of Earl Durand and All the President's Men are themselves lawbreakers. "Reasons of state" are used to justify heinous crimes in Special Section. A highly touted low-income housing project, in Abduction, is really a luxury complex for the very wealthy. Notwithstanding all this duplicity, many of the political figures we have referred to appear to be very successful -- electorally and otherwise. Walker is a phenomenal success in Nashville. Nixon triumphs at the polls in All the President's Men. Palantine wins the nomination in Taxi Driver. The politicians of Special Section have their way and escape post-war retribution. The only political figures who are not notably successful in the films in which they are depicted are the two most ideally portrayed: the liberal idealist in The Killer Elite is out of power and struggling to form an opposition; his life is in danger, and he seems almost resigned to martyrdom; Brian Walker, in Mahogany, loses his aldermanic bid and is running for Congress when we last see him. In the context of many commercial films, then, politicians may be wicked, but the public can hardly be credited with good judgement.

To what do we attribute this dismal view of politicians and politics? In the absence of hard data, a tentative and speculative answer is all that can be offered. Since the films that have been discussed went into release during late 1975 and early 1976, and since many of them would have been conceived and executed over a period of two years -- sometimes more, sometimes less - prior to release, it is tempting to attribute their bleak interpretation of politics to the simple fact of the Nixon-era scandals and turmoil.[7] There is more than a little truth in this explanation. This was, after all, the era of My Lai, Attica, the Pentagon Papers, the attempted assassination of George Wallace, the Spiro Agnew scandal and resignation, the myriad of disclosures, scandals, and resignations associated with Watergate, the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile (with allegations of American involvement), and Senate investigations into the activities of the C. I. A., F. B. I., and assorted other intelligence organizations -- and this list, of course, is neither complete nor detailed. It is hardly surprising, in one sense, that events of such notoriety should have entered the consciousness of film makers and virtually overwhelmed any complacent or idealistic notions of what politics and the world were "really" like. Nor is it surprising that this disillusionment should be most dramatically evident in the American films in the sample. Indeed, we have already seen that directors such as Robert Altman (Nashville), Sidney Pollack (Three Days of the Condor), and Robert Aldrich (Hustle), have effectively admitted a connection between these "headline" political events and the evolution of screenplays and shooting scripts; and the evidence for such a relationship is no less convincing in the case of several other American films (Dolemite, The Killer Elite, and A Boy and His Dog, for example).

While the "Nixon-era" explanation is valid up to a point, however, it cannot stand without qualification. First, it raises the question of whether those films which originated in countries other than America reflect an identifiably different political sensibility. In other words, having grouped films together within categories -- regardless of each film's country of origin -- and having attempted to contrast political content among the several categories, it may be instructive to present a brief overview of the sample, using "country of origin" as a variable. A second question that must be considered is whether the dismal view of politics we have noted is peculiar to this particular stage of film history, in America particularly, or merely a contemporary variation on an established cinematic theme. If the latter is the case, of course, the "Nixon-era" explanation is rather less satisfying, though it retains some validity. Let us consider these questions in turn.

Political content and "country of origin"

It will be evident by now that American films dominate the sample. Of the ninety films examined, fifty-four are American productions, nineteen are British or British co-productions, only four are from Canada, and thirteen are from other countries -- principally France and Italy, or French-Italian co-productions.[8] (The percentages are: American -- 60.0%; British -- 21.1%; Canadian -- 4.4%; and Others -- 14.4%.) In view of the volume of film product from each country, the only meaningful comparisons that can be drawn are between the American and British films. Not only are there sufficient numbers of films from each of those countries to form a basis for comparisons, but it seems far more likely that such contrasts will not be severely undermined by the problem of selectivity of releases -- i.e. we have certainly gotten a reasonable cross-section of American releases from the period in question, and probably a reasonable cross-section of British releases; but the several French and Italian releases are undoubtedly a highly select representation of the large number of films produced in those countries during the period under consideration. Certainly films such as Special Section (France) and Swept Away... (Italy) seem to reflect indigenous political concerns, but one can hardly offer even a tentative generalization about the Italian cinema of this period solely on the basis of Swept Away..., The Anti-Christ, and Beyond the Door; or about the French cinema as represented by Special Section, and The Story of Adèle H. The French-Italian co-productions -- The Night Caller, The Secret, and Down the Ancient Stairs -- complicate this problem rather than simplify it. Even the Canadian films -- Sudden Fury, Lies My Father Told Me, Recommendation for Mercy, and It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time -- constitute a sub-set that is too thin for reasonable generalization; sadly, even if one were prone to generalize on the basis of such a small number of films, one would be hard-pressed to discern a particular Canadian sensibility underlying them.[9]

With respect to the American and British films, it is revealing, first of all, to examine the contrasting distribution patterns for those films in relation to the various categories of political interest (see Table I).[10] It is clear, for example, that the British films in our sample were far more likely to be of virtually no political interest than were the American films -- 47.4% versus 24.1% -- while at the other extremity, the proportion of American films that were designated "analytical" was double the proportion of British films so classified -- 20.4% versus 10.5%. Proportionately, the American films were more than twice as likely to be of the "melodrama" variety, and

TABLE I -- PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FILMS:

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN BY CATEGORIES OF POLITICAL INTEREST

	U. K.	U. S.	Canada	Others	TOTAL
Minimal Interest	47.4 (9)	24.1 (13)	25.0 (1)	38.5 (5)	31.1 (28)
Sub-culture set	5.3 (1)	14.8 (8)	25.0 (1)	7.7 (1)	12.2 (11)
Melodramas	15.8 (3)	35.1 (19)	25.0 (1)	23.1 (3)	28.9 (26)
Message Movies	21.1 (4)	5.5 (3)	25.0 (1)	15.4 (2)	11.1 (10)
Analytical films	10.5 (2)	20.4 (11)	0.0 (0)	15.4 (2)	16.7 (15)
	100.1 (N=19)	99.9 (N=54)	100.0 (N=4)	100.1 (N=13)	100.0 (N=90)

almost three times as likely to fall within the sub-culture set than were the British films. By way of sharp contrast, the British films that were of any political interest tended to be message movies -- 21.1% of the British films were so categorized, compared with only 5.5% of the American films.[11]

Even allowing for the possibility of "mistaken" or questionable classifications of films, these differences, especially in the light of the detailed consideration of each film, seem to indicate a certain political robustness in American films, at least when compared with those emanating from Britain. This is particularly clear when one takes into consideration that, of the two British films designated "analytical ," one (Barry Lyndon) was directed by an American from his own screenplay, and another (The Devil is a Woman) was a co-production dominated by Italian creative personnel and, one suspects, Italian religious and political sensibilities.

It is interesting to note, too, that of the ten British films that are not in the minimal interest category -- i.e., those which were, in some sense, of political interest -- six have historical or fantastic settings (Royal Flash, Listzomania, The Rocky Horror Picture Show, Man Friday, Conduct Unbecoming, and Barry Lyndon), and only four have relatively contemporary settings (The 'Human' Factor, Caravan to Vaccares, The Devil is a Woman, and The

Romantic Englishwoman). Of those four, three are international co-productions, and, with the exception of The Romantic Englishwoman, none are about Britain, British predicaments, or British people. The Devil is a Woman is an Italian story, written and directed by Italians. Caravan to Vaccares and The 'Human' Factor are two of the seven melodramas dealing with national or international intrigue, which, it may be remembered, were relatively conservative "action" films featuring endangered American heroes.[12] In terms of the nature of their settings, the American films that were of political interest were far more likely to be contemporary; 60% of them clearly had modern settings, while only 40% had futuristic or historic settings -- even if one includes as "historic" those films set in the relatively recent past (Cooley High, Lucky Lady and The Hindenberg, for example).

To sum up, the British films in our sample tended to be of less political interest than the American films. When the British films were of political interest, message movies with non-contemporary settings were the preferred mode. Political content was far more likely in American movies, and far more likely to be either analytical, in the sense in which we have used that term, or included as a sub-plot within "non-political" melodramas. The politically interesting American films tended to be more contemporary than were the politically interesting British films;

when the latter were contemporary, they tended to eschew "British" content. Interestingly, the British films that were of *no* political interest were overwhelmingly contemporary: seven of the nine "minimal interest" British movies had contemporary settings, and one of the remaining two -- *Welcome to My Nightmare* -- was actually a filmed contemporary pop concert.

Setting aside now the contrasting modes of political expression between the British and American films, what can be said about the *content* of the British films considered? Stemming, no doubt, from the historical nature of much of the material is a tendency to examine in a satirical or critical manner the heyday of European colonialism and imperialism, with allusions, of course, ~~to~~ Britain's former status as one of the great international powers. In varying degrees, this theme appears in *Royal Flash*, *Man Friday*, *Conduct Unbecoming*, *Barry Lyndon* and *Lisztomania*, and there is even an allegorical remnant of it in *The 'Human' Factor*, when the film's major British star, John Mills, soberly and ably lends a helping hand to the younger, more aggressive American hero. A second aspect of the British films is a tendency towards relatively explicit references to class differences, which is evident in *Conduct Unbecoming*, *Man Friday*, *Royal Flash*, *Lisztomania*, *Barry Lyndon*, and *The Romantic Englishwoman*. This is not to suggest, however, that these films are *about* class differences, or that they discuss class differences in an analytical fashion; one is suggesting, rather, that class differences are mentioned explicitly in those several films, sometimes in a very casual and -- especially where royalty is involved -- jocular way. The best of them, Barry Lyndon, goes well beyond such casual mentions, and confronts some basic questions about human nature and the possibility of social order and justice. Also, one would not wish to suggest that the British films are unique in their allusions to class differences; many American films imply such status differences within society, though a different nomenclature is typically used -- "aristocrats" become "big shots," and terms such as "the bourgeoisie" are never employed. One's impression, nonetheless, is that class differences are not as explicitly evident in American films; and when class is alluded to, it tends to be depicted as a potentially eradicable (or accessible) consequence of achievement, rather than an indelible and unattainable characteristic of birth.

Films such as Barry Lyndon and The Devil is a Woman, we have argued, carry implications that admittedly transcend mere current events, and are, at any rate, rooted in what seems to be a contemporary filmic predilection to pit men against systems. For all that, it is a curious aspect of the British films in our sample that one is at a loss to discern in them any content that seems unambiguously grounded in contemporary British political realities. Assuming, as before, that British films were conceived and produced during a period of two years -- more or less -- prior to their North American release, and assuming that one can reasonably expect contemporary events to have an impact on films produced in a particular country, one might look for traces of: a host of very grave economic problems, including crippling nation-wide strikes and the temporary implementation of a three-day work week; a national controversy centering around the terms negotiated for Britain's entry into the Common Market; and, not least of all, the "troubles" in Northern Ireland and related demonstrations, bombings, and political controversies -- e.g., provisions for internment without trial -- in England itself. (Again, this list is not intended to be complete or detailed.) We are at a loss to discover even a hint of such controversies in the British films analyzed. Though this is arguably a consequence of our relative distance from British political events, which might impede perceptions of latent political content in particular, other explanations seem more likely.

First of all, the dramatic political events in Britain may have seemed immensely complex, sometimes belying hope of solution, and never tending towards solutions that were broadly accepted. By way of contrast, the Nixon-era turmoil seemed relatively clear-cut in terms of who was to blame for what; and, for a time at least, the defenders of the Nixon administration, the F. B. I., the C. I. A., the Vietnam War, and so on, were in disgrace. It is a plausible hypothesis regarding politics and film that the broader the apparent national consensus on a political issue, and the more apparent its resolution seems to be, the more likely it is to be reflected in popular cinema. Indeed, this may be one reason why the Vietnam War itself was almost (but not entirely) taboo in American films while the war was actually in progress.[13] Such a hypothesis must be qualified, however, by the realization that films such as _Taxi Driver_, _Nashville_, and _Hustle_, do not merely reflect what may or may not be a popular consenses (if indeed they reflect it at all); they go well beyond reflection, into an attempted exploration of the roots of the contemporary predicament. Moreover, the consensus hypothesis may be far too general: it may be applicable to _All the President's Men_, which neatly packages an explanation of the "problem" of Watergate, together with a comforting solution (though it doesn't _just_ do that); but it may not be as applicable to many of the other American analytical films, which avoid solutions altogether, whether comforting or otherwise.

A second possibility is that the "unEnglishness of English films" may have less to do with the absence of consensus than with the exigencies of film financing and marketing. In a 1974 article in _Sight and Sound_, for example, British director John Schlesinger was quoted as having said that "British films" -- defined by the author of the article, John Russell Taylor, as "Anything made in Britain, with British actors, accurately reflecting a contemporary British scene" -- were regarded as "box office poison."[14] Hence, said Taylor, the British concentration on costume pictures (i.e., those with historical settings) and science fiction -- a point that adds emphasis to what we have already said about the British films in our sample. By the same token, American films dealing with the contemporary American scene are regarded as highly marketable international commodities.[15] While this may have something to do with the way American films are marketed -- to say nothing of the star system and the complexities of film financing -- one suspects that it has as much to do with the fact that, for international cinema audiences, America's problems are more glamorous, more compelling, more familiar and more palatable than are Britain's difficulties.

Politics in American films: variations over time

Having argued that British films in our sample betray no clear relationship to contemporary British politics, and that the American films seem rooted in Nixon-era scandals and controversies, there remains the perplexing question of whether the political content in American films is really very new. It may be, after all, that we have simply observed a phenomenon that has been characteristic of American films for quite a long time -- that it is not so much a matter of American films _reflecting_ contemporary politics, as contemporary politics _fitting_ a stereotype of politicians and politics that has been a staple of American films for decades. Since we have systematically examined only a small set of films from a brief period in film history, our comments here must necessarily be tentative and highly impressionistic; and we shall have to rely, to a limited extent, on observations by other students of film.

Eric Rhode's masterful _A History of the Cinema from its Origins to 1970_, for example, though it contains no general discussion of politics in cinema, offers occasional insightful or provocative observations on the matter. For one thing, Rhode argues that American films of the early nineteen-sixties marked an important departure from the political limitations of the "old Hollywood." _The Manchurian Candidate_, for instance,

> contains an attack on the electorate's trust in its politicians; and the value of this criticism has been confirmed by the mystery that still surrounds the assassination of John F. Kennedy, or the revelations of the Pentagon Papers and the Watergate affair. But, just as importantly, its debunking typified a distrust of politicians that the old Hollywood would never have allowed, an awareness of how inadequate human beings may well be in controlling the technolog-

> ical power that Kubrick was to play with in Dr. Strangelove and Sidney Lumet to embroider on more solemnly in Fail Safe (1963), where a terrible dream about nuclear destruction is acted out in reality. Its assumptions underlie Franklin J. Schaffner's The Best Man (1964), based on Gore Vidal's play, and Theodore Flicker's more light-hearted The President's Analyst (1967).[16]

Though political scepticism or cynicism does seem to have been advanced with some vigor in the sixties, the allegation that a distrust of politicians would not have been "allowed" in the old Hollywood will not stand up under scrutiny. Besides being contrary to personal impressions, it seems contrary to the facts -- Leslie Halliwell, in his encyclopedic Filmgoer's Companion cites no fewer than sixteen titles as examples of "the many films alleging graft and corruption in the U. S.";[17] among them are many well known films that pre-date the sixties by many years, including Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939), Citizen Kane (1941), State of the Union (1948), and All the King's Men (1950). And in his review of "The Problem Film in America," first published in the early nineteen-sixties, Richard Dyer MacCann was moved to complain that the "American screen has rarely presented American politics with any depth of understanding. The prevailing tone has usually reflected the feeling of many Americans that politicians are shifty, suspicious characters but relatively unimportant."[18] Though one would question MacCann's suggestion that politicians in American films are "relatively unimportant," the observation that there is a tradition of "shifty, suspicious" political characters in American films seems fundamentally correct. That tradition may have been amplified in more recent times, and it has certainly been highly visible during the past decade, not only in the films we have examined in detail, but in some of the great commercial successes that pre-date the films in our sample. Examples which come readily to mind include Bullitt (1969), Walking Tall (1973), The Godfather, Part II (1974), Chinatown (1974) and Jaws (1975)

It may well be that there are at least two identifiable traditions (or "prevailing tones," in MacCann's words) relating to the depiction of politics in American films. On the one hand, there is the stereotype of the "shifty, suspicious" politician, represented in the present sample by films such as Dolemite and Breakheart Pass, and by films as diverse in time and atmosphere as Mr. Smith Goes to Washington and Walking Tall. These are the films which allege individual corruption and which offer simple solutions: the hero -- violently or otherwise -- overcomes the politician and his allies, and all is well. A corrupt individual is undone by a self-righteous individual. The second tradition, we would suggest, is less well established -- indeed, it may be premature to refer to it as a tradition at all. We are referring to the "men against systems" theme, represented in the present sample, of course, by many of the analytical films, and very evident in a variety of other nineteen-seventies films such as Executive Action (1973), The Parallax View, The Conversation, Serpico, and Chinatown -- the last four all released in 1974. What seems unique about these is the pervasiveness of the "problem" confronted (outright paranoia is an aspect of some of them) and the insistence that everything is very definitely not all right in the end: there may not be a solution, and if there is, it may not be within the hero's grasp. As one critic wrote of The Parallax View,

> Frank Capra's American boy isn't going to rise up and save the day. Now the bad guys are smarter and so powerful that good intentions and native intelligence won't see him through. He can't even be the anti-hero of the fifties and sixties, holding his own in an absurd society, for the society has become too threatening. This time he's a victim.[19]

The hero-as-victim motif is, we have seen, closely associated with the men-against-systems theme in many of the analytical films in our sample; and it is a motif that seems to signify something more substantial than the mere absence of a simple-minded "happy ending" -- namely, pessimism or profound uncertainty about the future.

One would not wish to claim here that the men-against-systems theme, and all it implies, was unheard of in American films prior to the seventies. Citizen Kane, for example, may be an earlier, complex instance, and -- if the term "system" is extended to include all environmental factors -- it may be that the theme is a fundamental characteristic of most American art, including films and literature. What we do mean to argue, however, is that 1974 and 1975 seem to have been vintage years for men-against-systems films with typically pessimistic or ambiguous outcomes. Of the twenty most popular[20] films in 1974, for example, at least six were variations on that theme -- Serpico, The Longest Yard, The Trial of Billy Jack, Chinatown, Lenny and The Godfather, Part II; 1975's twenty most successful films included One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Dog Day Afternoon, Three Days of the Condor, Hustle, and Barry Lyndon (a "British" film scripted and directed by an American), along with two other politically interesting films that do not quite fit the men-against-systems pattern -- Shampoo and Jaws. In sharp contrast, 1973 and 1976 appear to have been transition periods. There was comparatively little of political interest among 1973's twenty most popular films -- the police cycle was winding down, with success stories such as Magnum Force and Walking Tall, and there were two "liberal" movies, The Way We Were and the Woody Allan comedy, Sleeper. A more telling transition may have occurred in 1976, the year of Taxi Driver, Network All the President's Men, and Rocky -- the beginning of the end, perhaps, for the victimized impotent hero, followed by a stirring reaffirmation of the possibilities of heroic achievement.

There have been many, many American films released over the past several years, of course, and -- in the absence of a systematic longitudinal study -- it would be foolhardy and indefensible to retrospectively "shoehorn" them into thematic categories. Still, in the case of the limited number of films that carry political implications, and within the limitations of personal impressions and the present research, one cannot help but conclude that the Nixon-era scandals and controversies had unmistakable effects -- effects that are not as evident prior to 1974 and that seem to have dissipated towards the end of 1976. It must be remembered, however, that even in the case of politically interesting films, the discovery of thematic consistency should not obscure the fact of individual differences -- differences which would be evident in the film-by-film consideration of most of our sample. There remains, too, the question of whether the broad thematic consistencies and variations we have identified, or the specific political content of individual films, can be presumed to have any impact on audiences. Speculation with respect that question will be an important aspect of our concluding remarks about the implications of this study.

Politics and commercial films: final observations

Without presuming to have exhausted the political content that can be gleaned from the ninety films studied, and still less to have answered or even raised all pertinent questions about the relationship between that political content and the real world of politics, it is appropriate now that we consider some of the implications of what has been said so far. We shall do this by setting out five general propositions pertaining to: the volume or frequency of political content in commercial films; the necessity of placing a broad construction on the concept "political"; the inadequacy of "conservative" or "escapist" labels as descriptions of commercial film content; the need to go beyond variations in explicit political content to a consideration of other variations, related, for example, to the way principal characters function; and the importance of reopening the whole question of the potential effects of political content on what is really a variety of audiences. Clearly, these several propositions are interlocking rather than mutually exclusive. Statements about the volume of political content are obviously and inextricably bound up with the question of how political content is to be defined; and the question of whether content can properly be designated "escapist" implies fundamental questions about the function of content for audiences. Together, the several propositions constitute a reflection and elaboration on our own research, a reflection on the findings of other researchers, and a comment on the directions future research might take. They also constitute a challenge to what may be fairly characterized as the "conventional wisdom" about political content in commercial films.

There is a great deal more political content in commercial films -- and a greater variety of political content -- than is typically recognized by students of politics. We are assuming here that the virtual neglect of commercial films by political scientists can reasonably be attributed to a failure to recognize the wealth of political connotations to be found in this medium, though the neglect may also stem from an understandable scepticism about whether such content is likely to have any measurable impact. The question of impact shall be considered presently; for now, we shall limit ourselves to the claim that -- from the subtlety and grace of The Story of Adèle H. to the vulgarity of Abduction, from the single-mindedness of The Master Gunfighter to the richness of Nashville - we have demonstrated a diversity of political content heretofore infrequently acknowledged by professional students of politics. Also, the discovery of this content cannot significantly be attributed to idiosyncratic factors, such as a unique affection for politics and film: whether recognized by political scientists or not, the political and social significance of films is, we have seen, frequently and readily grasped by professional film critics, and we have been able to garner support for our inferences from a variety of such sources. Though this method of "informal" content analysis is not without its attendant problems and remains highly subjective, it has the distinct virtue of prompting one to treat "film as film," in the words of V. F. Perkins, rather than limiting one's observations to what is strictly verbal. Coincidentally, an approach similar to this was recently advocated -- and forcefully so -- by a sociologically-inclined student of the medium, Andrew Tudor, who denounced as "pernicious rubbish" the tendency to exhalt rigidly formal content analysis over and above the so-called "random perceptions of the inferior critic."[21] We would argue, following Tudor, that the "insights and interests of film criticism" can benefit political science as well as sociology, and we would heartily concur with his suggestion that the "everyday" cinema warrants serious attention.

A sensible approach to the political content of commercial films necessitates a sensitivity to a variety of politically relevant material -- not just the material that is political in the most obvious sense. Whereas in our first proposition we are stressing the importance of a sensitivity to the complexity and subtlety of film as a medium, here we mean to stress the limiting nature of a narrow definition of politics. There is evident, for example, among those who do acknowledge the importance of politics and commercial films a tendency to give short shrift to most kinds of political content. Thus, a dichotomy may be set out between those films which have a "clear political purpose" -- films which are about politics in a very obvious way, and which consequently warrant serious consideration -- and "entertainment" films, which have political content that can be summarily dismissed as "prodding in the direction of conformity" and reinforcing traditional social values.[22] It does not seem to be the case, however, that films can be so easily dichotomized -- indeed, it has been a central argument here that there are gradations of political interest and various modes of political expression, only one of which is exemplified by films which are politically "engaged" in the manner of Swept Away... and Special Section.

The limitations of such a dichotomy are less severe, of course, to the extent that expressions such as "clear political purpose" are interpreted in a reasonably broad fashion, and to the extent that films consigned to the second category are analyzed rather than dismissed outright. If, on the other hand, only the Wertmüller and Costa-Gavras films, and possibly Robert Altman's Nashville, are thought to have a "clear political purpose," and if everything else is facilely dismissed as "system supportive," we will have ignored political and social points of view as diverse as Gordon Parks' treatment of growing up in Harlem (Aaron Loves Angela), the "leftist-squelching" histrionics of Sky Riders, the anti-hanging sentiments of Recommendation for Mercy, and the morose lamentations of Hustle. In terms of any interest in film as an art form, one can cheerfully ignore all four of the films mentioned, and many others in the sample, for that matter; but in terms of film as a conduit of political content, all four warrant attention, and none of them is adequately described by the simple notion of prodding in the direction of conformity (though that may be one aspect of audience response to them). It goes without saying, of course, that one need not "approve" of, or agree with, the political content one detects in films, but surely that should not preclude analysis. The view that serious political films are those which challenge audiences, raise consciousness, attack "existing exploitative systems" -- a view that is apparent, for example, in Gay's discussion of political content in the Swedish cinema[23]- is extremely narrow, and may well exclude, among other things, the likes of Triumph of the Will.

Another aspect of a broader conception of the political, should be a recognition of the fact that the description of certain social and political situations, and the statements, points of view, or even theoretical stances therein implied, should be regarded as relevant even in the absence of explicit, prescriptive material.[24] Which is to say that a film which shows hardship (Cooley High, for example) may not be politically inconsequential, even though such hardship is never explained, confronted, or resolved in obvious political terms. Similarly, we would argue that the depiction of the Triplette character in Nashville, over and above any other political significance that might be attributed to the film, is a revealing and unusual description of politically relevant processes of interpersonal influence, though those processes are not overtly analyzed. And a film such as Taxi Driver, though hardly original in its frustration-aggression overtones, allows us to vicariously experience frustration, anger and impotence with an intensity that, if we are fortunate, is outside the range of our normal experiences. Nor should the examples cited be taken to mean that the only relevant film content is that which is somehow "realistic." Nightmare fantasies such as A Boy and His Dog -- or, less recently, A Clockwork Orange -- can be far more provocative than the most detailed, realistic fiction. As in the case of historical films such as Robin and Marian, most filmgoers may or may not be able to decode the allegorical implications of such material, but many people may relate nonetheless to the mood of the work -- the sense of lost ideals, of the crimes committed in the name of patriotism and order, and of the moral choices men must make.

Terms such as the "mood" of a film, or a "sense" of lost ideals, imply finally that we have to be as sensitive to the "expressive" and "normative" components of film content as to its cognitive component.[25] It will be recalled, for example, that in terms of the cognitive content of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, McMurphy, the hero, is a convicted criminal; one would suggest, however, that this is of no real consequence to most members of the audience -- most of us are probably emotionally involved with him as a fundamentally blameless free spirit, and normatively we tend to positively evaluate most of what he does, including what we know of his dubious past. In a sense, what is political about Cuckoo's Nest is the feel of it -- the discontent with conventional values and established authority, and the celebration of rebellion. Mahogany is another interesting case in point: a cognitive reading of its content would likely make it appear to be very political indeed -- electoral processes are involved, we get some notion of politics as group conflict, and the film is on the side of slum tenants and against developers; but in terms of the emotional impact of the film, romance and glamour seem to be the substance of it.

The whole notion of commercial films as "conservative" and/or "escapist" -- whatever its validity may have been in the past -- needs to be modified and brought up to date. As Tudor has said of popular culture in general and films in particular:

> It is commonplace to see popular culture as basically integrative, as conserving and supporting the given institutions of society. Most 'mass culture' views in some way approximate this image. But often they do not specify the detail of the mechanisms involved; they claim simply that mass culture is 'escapist' or that it is fundamentally 'conservative'. The absence of detail in such argument is disturbing. It suggests, as always, that knowledge has been replaced by assumption.[26]

Though they are often used in tandem, the adjectives "conservative" and "escapist" need to be considered in turn. If "conservative" means simply "non-revolutionary," the point is readily conceded -- certainly no films in the present sample clearly exhort audiences to revolution. But if "conservative" is taken to be descriptive of those "who are more or less satisfied with the existing social order and who wish to preserve it," as compared with those "whom this order does not suit and who wish to change it,"[27] one cannot agree that all, or even most, commercial films warrant the description. Films as diverse as One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Dog Day Afternoon, Whiffs, Nashville, The Romantic Englishwoman, Abduction, Lipstick, and Taxi Driver -- to name just a few -- do not seem especially enamoured of the existing social order; they seem unmistakably critical of it. To be sure, the criticisms are not structured in the manner one would expect in, say, a political tract -- and in some cases they may appear foolish and trivial -- but they can hardly be construed as conservative, at least with respect to content; whether they are conservative in terms of effects is an entirely different question.

The idea of commercial films as primarily escapist is one of the venerable clichés of film studies, though recent literature suggests it may be on the wane. In his literate and cheerful survey of America in the Movies, for example, Michael Wood puts the "escapist" question in clear perspective when he asks, "Why is pure escapism so difficult in movies? Why does the Lusitania keep sinking in films that really have no call for it?... [Why] bring up the question of race at all in the movies, if you just want to make money and keep people happy?"[28] It is not that the movies mean to trouble us, Wood argues -- and he is not talking principally about modern films at this point -- but "beneath the comfortable accommodations of their plots lurk stubborn social realities which Hollywood, like most of us, can't quite face and certainly can't make go away." From our own sample, Three Days of the Condor and Mahogany may be excellent examples of the problems Hollywood "can't make go away" -- both are "escapist fantasies," one might argue, with big stars and glossy production values, but each has troublesome questions lurking within and beneath its plot. Instead of dismissing such films as escapist, it may be more revealing -- as Perkins has indicated, in a typically insightful comment -- to examine what people escape *into*. Escaping into *Mahogany* is probably not the same experience as escaping into *Carry on Behind*. Escapism, in other words, ought to be regarded as a relative rather than an absolute matter: in terms of exposure to political content, watching *Three Days of the Condor* is unquestionably an escapist activity relative to reading a book of political philosophy; but it may *not* be as escapist as going to a hockey game, doing a crossword puzzle, or listening to music.

In attempting to discover relationships between the real world of politics and the political content of commercial films, variations in the depiction of heroes (or "anti-heroes") may be more revealing than variations in explicit political content. We have already made a tentative case for this in the matter of the American films in our sample and American films prior to and after the six-month period during which our research was conducted. Such relationships may not be limited, however, to simple correlations between thematic variations and "current events," though the latter correlations may be much more evident than subtler differences over time. Considerably more far-reaching attempts to relate film content to political and social realities can be found in recent studies of the Western genre, including Phillip French's efforts to relate the style and content of Westerns to the style and content of prominent politicians.[29] In a more rigorous fashion, Will Wright's Sixguns and Society -- A Structural Study of the Western includes a classification of Westerns from 1930 to 1972 in terms of their plot variations -- e.g., the "classical plot" (exemplified by The Plainsman), the "vengeance variation" (One-Eyed Jacks), the "transition theme" (High Noon), and the "professional plot" (The Wild Bunch) -- and an attempt to relate those variations to changes in the structure of American social institutions. To wit:

> In the Western, the classical plot shows that the way to achieve such human rewards as friendship, respect and dignity is to separate yourself from others and use your strength as an autonomous individual to succor them. This plot exists in the context of a restricted but active market economy. The vengeance variation -- in the context of a tentative planned economy -- weakens the compatibility of the individual and society by showing that the path to respect and love is to separate yourself from others, struggling individually against your many and strong enemies but striving to remember and return to the softer values of marriage and humility. The transition theme, anticipating new social values, argues that love and companionship are available -- at the cost of becoming a social outcast -- to the individual who stands firmly and righteously against the intolerance and ignorance of society. Finally, the professional plot -- in the context of a corporate economy -- argues that companionship and respect are to be achieved

> only by becoming a skilled technician, who joins an elite group of professionals, accepts any job that is offered, and has loyalty only to the integrity of the team, not to any competing social or community values.[30]

Wright's ingenious study is by no means the last word on Westerns -- for one thing, a genre-based theory can hardly account for the virtual disappearance of the genre, as has happened lately -- but it is highly relevant in the present context because it demonstrates that the compatibility of the individual and society is, in effect, a problem to which many American Westerns are addressed. This compatibility question, of course, is not unlike the emphasis we have placed on the men-against-systems theme that manifests itself in a significant number of more contemporary films -- "contemporary" with respect to setting and time of release. What is especially revealing, however, is the fact that for all four of Wright's thematic variations society is something that can be entered or left -- more or less on one's own, or on "negotiated" terms (e.g., Shane voluntarily enters society, earns its respect, defeats its enemies, and voluntarily decides not to stay). In our contemporary version of the hero in society -- principally the analytical films -- the concept of society seems more highly differentiated, and tends to be given an institutional focus (The Killer Elite and All the President's Men, for example); more significantly, society, in the context of contemporary films, is not something which one voluntarily enters or leaves --

it is not something from which one can disengage oneself, and one does not have the option of riding off into the sunset. A significant exception to the latter rule, perhaps, is The Killer Elite -- by Sam Peckinpah, the director of the "professional" Western, The Wild Bunch -- whose heroes are literally setting out to sea in the concluding sequence; the broader implications are clearly underscored by the hero's badly-written last line: "Don't know where we're goin' -- don't know where we been -- but I know where we was wasn't it." Finally, whereas the mythic heroes of popular Westerns typically "get the job done," or at least retain some sense of integrity in death, mid-seventies heroes, we have shown, are not always as efficacious. Pauline Kael, as usual, was not too wide of the mark with her comment that, "The new heroes don't soar; they can barely see straight."[31]

Besides the very general and complex question of the hero's relationship to society -- a question which properly ought to be the subject of research extending over a long period of time and not based exclusively on plot summaries -- more obvious questions can be raised. The simple matter of who is -- and who isn't -- depicted as a hero seems basic, and it is easily ascertained, even from the briefest plot summary.[32] In view of some of the fluctuations evident in the seventies, such as the flourishing and waning of the films in which policemen are heroes, one wonders if a frequency distribution of the occupations of popular film heroes during the last half century would yield interesting results. And if a potency-impotency dimension could be incorporated into such a study, the outcome might prove very revealing in relation to events in the larger society.[33]

The question of the effects of political content on cinema audiences has not been properly answered -- and is not likely to be properly answered with research techniques that are blind to some of the realities of the cinema experience. We have come, finally, to the difficult matter of audience effects, to the question and accusation that must, of necessity, haunt all research into the content of polular cinema: "What of audiences? Surely none of this means anything to them." Perhaps this is the attitude that prompts some researchers to seek sanctuary in vague assertions to the effect that the movies somehow "reinforce" us in unspecified ways that have yet to be determined. There may even be a germ of truth in such assertions, as we shall argue presently.

Though a detailed review of the "effects" literature in relation to film content will not be presented here, we must acknowledge from the outset that the results of such research are not terribly encouraging. As Furhammar and

Isaksson have pointed out, the results of such studies "offer very little evidence to support the theory that feature films are able to effect changes of behavior, inspire actions or even alter opinions."[34] A similar conclusion was reached by Andrew Tudor, after a more detailed and critical examination of much of the research, including the vast experimental work on the effects of film violence on levels of aggression:

> ...there is no doubt that most research is little help in understanding the general effects of film. Because they deal with an atomized and socially isolated situation there is rarely any safe route for generalization. They do demonstrate that the images on the screen have some effects, especially on the emotions. But that needs little demonstration; if it had no such effects the cinema could hardly have survived this long. In other respects they waver. Although some influence on beliefs and conduct can hardly be denied... its depth and pattern remains undiscovered. The best one can say is that the experimental studies are inconclusive. They serve only to demonstrate that there is no simple one-to-one relation between the movie and any effect it may have, that there is no simple pattern to mass media effects.[35]

The reference to "atomized and socially isolated" situations is a telling allusion to the limitations of laboratory settings, where much film effects research has been done. This is especially common in aggression research, a great deal of which seems based on the use of a single, short sequence from the boxing film, Champion -- not only is the "audience" removed from the reality of the theatrical situation, but the content itself is removed from its vitally important *context*. Other effects research has focused on "simple one-to-one" relationships between, say, an anti-racist film and subsequent attitude or behavior changes in a target audience. Typically, these seem to be "message" or "problem" films, or more blatant kinds of propaganda, and there is little wonder that effects have been less than startling -- anyone with a shred of film sense is immediately sensitized to the intent of the "communication" and the message is, at any rate, so thoroughly and self-righteously justified *within the context of the film* that it may not be perceived to have relevance or consequence outside the theatre. It is not difficult to imagine someone agreeing that Sidney Poitier should be allowed to marry Katherine Houghton in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?*, but cringing at the prospect of sharing a housing development with other black people.

Those remarks aside, our purpose here is not to provide a detailed criticism of empirical research, though some of our comments are obviously born of a dissatisfaction with some of that material. Nonetheless, the aggression research *is* unquestionably interesting and valuable, and more of it ought to be, and undoubtedly will be, done; the search for other one-to-one relationships is also instructive, because even when discouraging it adds to our comprehension of the complexity of the processes involved. The question we wish to consider, however, is the question of whether audiences in theatres can be presumed to be affected by films, particularly political content that is not as evident as the overt meaning of a film such as *Recommendation for Mercy* -- an anti-capital punishment "message" movie which conceivably has the limited effect of simply persuading its target audience that every precaution should be taken to ensure that *innocent* people are not hanged.

Audiences may be affected by films in ways not currently evident to researchers because of measurement techniques that are geared towards effects which are: immediate; observable; and related to the explicit content of a specific film -- or worse, one sequence from a specific film. It may be, however, that audience effects are: latent rather than immediate; not observable using attitude measurement techniques, but potentially observable using techniques such as open-ended questionnaires or loosely structured interviews; related only *indirectly* to explicit content, or grounded in more complex thematic patterns; and cumulative over time rather than specific to a particular film. The point here is not that films have mysterious, awesome long-term effects that are inherently inaccessible to social science researchers; it is, rather, that we may be asking the wrong questions. Instead of instantaneously converting a significant number of people to the viewpoint it propagates, for example, a film such as Lipstick may cause people to think about the issues it raises -- a possibility rarely mentioned in relation to commercial films -- and in thinking about those issues, learning may occur. The film may sensitize a viewer to related stimuli, such as a magazine article on similar topics, that may have been ignored in the absence of a "preparatory" fictional film presentation; or, in a more perverse way, the film may convince the viewer that the principal character "got what was coming to her" and this in turn may be generalized eventually to real world situations.

The films of Sam Peckinpah are another interesting case in point. Among those who worry about violence in the media, Peckinpah's work tends to be held in very low regard; since social psychologists are understandably concerned about the violence question, it is probably fair to assume that the question most likely to be raised about The Killer Elite is whether it increases or decreases one's agressive propensity. A less obvious question, and one that could be asked of Peckinpah's collected works, is this: Does Peckinpah persuade his audiences that organized society is the enemy of the individual, and that coercion is essential to its nature? Does he effectively encourage us to think about moral questions -- indeed, does he make us more moral -- when he insists, either by implication or explicitly, that in the final analysis an individual must "enter his own house justified"?[36] The answer to these questions may be a resounding "no" or a tentative and greatly qualified "yes"; but neither answer can be properly inferred from readings on a bogus laboratory voltmeter.

The cumulative effects of commercial films may be more far-reaching than anything easily or immediately measurable, in laboratories or out of them. It is not too improbable, for example, to suggest that there may be a "film culture" -- or indeed, a political culture of the cinema -- that is the inheritance of a cumulative exposure to film content. The elements of this culture might include: a scepticism about science; a suspicion of institutions; a pessimism about human nature; an almost anarchical conception of individuality and its importance; a tolerance, if not an enthusiasm, for rebellion; an "anti-establishment" bias, and a prejudice in favor of society's "underdogs." The acquisition of such a culture would depend, of course, on frequency of exposure to films and would likewise be conditional upon any number of qualifying factors, especially the kinds of films to which one was exposed. In other words, audiences cannot be regarded as an undifferentiated mass, nor commercial films as an undifferentiated aggregation of celluloid. Apart from the one "big" film per year which the vast majority of filmgoers will see, there may be audience sub-sets that do not overlap greatly. The 'Human' Factor and Sky Riders, for example, may have acquired reputations as "action" pictures, and may have attracted a clientele very different from those attracted to "serious" films such as Swept Away..., Conduct Unbecoming, or All the President's Men. This suggests the possibility of different film sub-cultures reflecting and/or shaping the world views of different audience sub-sets. On the one hand, there are the films which affirm that one's own society is the best of all possible worlds, and define problems and tensions in terms of disrupting influences from without (this happens on an "international" scale in films such as Sky Riders, and on a "local" scale in films such as Walking Tall, which depicts prostitution and gambling as creations of "outside" mobsters preying on basically decent small-town folks). A second film sub-culture -- and possibly a more important one in the mid-seventies -- defines society itself as the problem and sees conflict and tension as elements coming from within society and from within the individuals who comprise it (Dog Day Afternoon and Nashville are obvious examples). In its most extreme manifestation, this latter vision may approximate that of screenwriter and novelist Mario Puzo (The Godfather), who has intimated that "society, cloaked in the robes of law, masked by religion, armed with authority sprung from the beginning of history, is itself the archcriminal of mankind."[37] In its less extreme and more typical manifestation, it is a vision steeped in a radicalism "of the vaguest kind" -- "an emotional perception that something is wrong."[38]

The task of discovering relationships between the political content of commercial films and the subsequent expectations, opinions, ideologies, behavior, or general psychological dispositions of audiences is enormously complicated by the fact that spectators cannot sensibly be regarded as the "passive recipients" of that content.[39] We do not sit dumbfounded in theatres, indiscriminately soaking up whatever "world view" happens to be thrown our way. We bring to the theatre our own views, our own prejudices, hopes and fears, and these undoubtedly temper our perceptions of, and responses to, film content. At the same time, we are not simply observers of that content -- biased or otherwise; through the medium of identification with principal characters, we are actively, sometimes intensely, involved in the world created for us by the film maker. We are, as Perkins has pointed out, participant observers[40] -- a process that may, in the long run if not the short run, and notwithstanding psychological defense mechanisms, facilitate the broadening of our experiences, the modification of our opinions, the transformation of our sense of morality, the changing of our behavior -- all for better or worse. However complex and elusive such relationships may be, their discovery cannot proceed from a set of unrealistic, unexamined assumptions about the vacuity of commercial films and the gullibility of audiences. It can only proceed from theories and assumptions that are imaginative and plausible, not stale and prejudicial. It is, finally, a task that cannot even begin until we recognize that there is political content in commercial films and it is worth examining. The documentation of some of that content has been our task.

ENDNOTES

1. George Orwell, "Charles Dickens," in" Sonia Orwell and Ian Angus, eds., The Collected Essays, Journalism and Letters of George Orwell, Vol. I (Middlesex, U.K.: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 501.

2. Raymond Durgnat, A Mirror For England (London: Faber and Faber, 1970), pp. 7-8.

3. Leif Furhammer and Folke Isaksson, Politics and Film, trans. by Kersti French (London: Studio Vista, 1971), p. 243.

4. Egypt's foremost film director, Salah Abou Seif, has been quoted as saying: "Any criticism of a profession is regarded by the censor's office as taboo. Thus a policeman cannot be corrupted, nor can judges, lawyers, or journalists. And certainly government officials are always pure as the new fallen snow." See: Raymond William Baker, "Egypt in Shadows," American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 17 (3), 1974, p. 402.

5. See: Harold Lasswell, Psychopathology and Politics, reprinted in The Political Writings of Harold Lasswell (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1951).

6. Hal Phillip Walker's platform, "New Roots for the Nation," is presented in its entirety by Joan Tewkesbury in the published version of the Nashville screenplay (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1976). Some portions of the platform are not included in the film. According to Altman, the material was written by Mississippi novelist Thomas Hal Phillips, who was told to "invent a candidate....I told him to invent a man who he would like to see elected, and who he thought could be elected." It is not at all clear in the film why Walker, a third party candidate, would be winning primaries. The answer may lie with Howard K. Smith who, according to Altman, wrote his own political commentary for the film. See: Connie Byrne and William O. Lopez, "Nashville," Film Quarterly, Vol. 29 (2), p. 24.

7. The expression "Nixon-era scandals and turmoil" is, of course, a shorthand notation for a host of problems that cannot be laid entirely at the former president's doorstep. "Watergate" is a more conventional and convenient notation, but we have tended to avoid it because of its more limited connotation.

There is some evidence that television content also seemed to be affected by events in the real world of politics. According to one observer, "odious public servants" started coming into vogue during the fall, 1975, season: "Heretofore the object of reverence and a chronic source of fabled heroism for the Hollywood TV series sausage factories, the U.S. Government has been supplying a startling number of creeps and heavies as the family killing hour segments roll off the assembly line." Among the "creeps" mentioned are "a slimy U.S. Senator," an "obnoxious Justice Department attorney," and a "viciously dedicated undercover Federal narcotics agent". See: Bill Greeley, "Feds Are Now Heavies As TV Absorbs Watergate," Variety, Sept. 17, 1975. About 18 months later, a rather different perception of television content was articulated in: Stephen Arons and Ethan Katsh, "How TV Cops Flout the Law," Saturday Review, March 19, 1977. According to Arons and Katsh, "The image of police on television has been changing, and the change has political significance....Today even the most blatantly illegal and unconstitutional behavior of police officers is glorified by an endless stream of television police dramas. The result, we believe, is that what started off as merely fictional entertainment has now begun to have the political effect of 'softening up' public opinion and making it more accepting of such police conduct." The writers attempt to relate the changing image of television police to the American Supreme Court's alleged move to the "right" on police and civil liberties issues.

8. In an era of multi-national film co-productions, attributions of "country of origin" are very difficult to make, except in the most obvious cases, and "official" designations -- when they are available -- are not always reliable. As the rule of thumb, the country of origin designations from Variety and the Monthly Film Bulletin seem reasonably valid, and those are the ones we have relied upon most often. However, we have qualified that rule of thumb when it has seemed misleading. Thus, The 'Human' Factor is usually designated a British film -- presumably for financial or technical reasons -- but it is an American story, directed by an American, with an American star; in terms of its content, and the sensibilities it reflects, the "British" designation must be qualified. When applicable, we have pointed out such qualifications in the body of the text.

For purposes of comparison with the American films, and keeping in mind the backgrounds of creative personnel, it seemed generally safe to regard the British co-productions as simply British; when that simplifying assumption had to be modified, we have done so in the text. We could not make such an assumption about French-Italian co-productions, because appropriate data were not always available -- data, for example, pertaining to the backgrounds of writers and directors.

9. The four Canadian films in the sample were all produced in English-speaking Canada; no French language Canadian films were released commercially in Alberta during the six-month period under consideration. This means, obviously, that -- to the extent these findings are typical of film exhibition in Canada -- the political and social content to which Canadian filmgoers are exposed is overwhelmingly rooted in the experiences of other countries.

10. When comparing British and American films in relation to the various categories of political interest, it must be remembered, of course, that we are using the term "sample" in its broadest sense. Statistically speaking, we do not have a properly-drawn random sample of films and there is no mathematical justification for inferences to "parent" populations -- e.g., all American films released in the seventies, or all British films released in 1974 and 1975. Practically speaking, however, we have a large enough number of "cases" from each country to make tentative comparisons. No broader claim is intended.

11. In addition to our relative distance from British political events, other distorting factors may affect our perception of political content in British films. It might be argued, for example, that the researcher's exposure to a comparatively large number of American films over the years has had the important effect of sensitizing him to a greater range of nuances and connotations in American films, relative to films from Britain and other countries. Certainly we must acknowledge a preference for the best work of the good American directors -- Coppola, Kubrick, Altman, Scorsese, and Spielberg, for example -- over the best work of the most prominent British directors -- David Lean, Joseph Losey, Ken Russell, Richard Attenborough, and John Schlesinger, to name just a few. We would argue, nonetheless, that this is a contemporary preference, and would not necessarily have been operative during an earlier era when British films were simply better than they are now. Moreover, our preference for

American films, if it can be properly called that, does not preclude an enthusiastic appreciation for the works of the new German directors (especially Rainer Fassbinder and Wim Wenders), Switzerland's Alain Tanner Australia's Peter Weir, and scores of others. The point is that the cinema is alive and thriving in other countries besides America; it does not seem to be thriving in Britain.

12. Strangely enough, of the seven "conservative" melodramas dealing with national or international intrigue, always from the perspective of American heroes, two are "officially" British, and four of the remaining five have significant British creative input: Caravan to Vaccares and The 'Human' Factor are certified as British; Journey into Fear is from a story by British novelist Eric Ambler; and Sky Riders, Call Him Mr. Shatter, and Who? all have British directors. Interestingly too, the director of The 'Human' Factor, Edward Dmytryk, was one of the famous "Hollywood Ten" who were imprisoned after refusing to answer questions about political affiliations, during testimony before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Dmytryk allegedly "turned informer" after serving part of his sentence. See: Furhammar and Isaksson, Politics and Film, pp. 71-72.

13. Until recently, Vietnam has surfaced in American films principally within stories about returning veterans; or, as Richard Combs has said (Monthly Film Bulletin, July, 1978), reverberations of the conflict have filtered through the "hardy, ever-adaptable genre of the Western ." According to one observer, by the summer of 1973 there had been "close to twenty films about veterans, but in no sense has the homecoming been an occasion for celluloid celebration. If anything, Johnny's return has been unsung and unnoted at best and at worst a catalyst for violence." See: Julian Smith, "Between Vermont and Violence: Film Portraits of Vietnam Veterans," Film Quarterly, Vol. 26 (4), p. 10. Vietnam veterans are prominent in four of the films in our sample: Travis Bickel in Taxi Driver, Sonny in Dog Day Afternoon, the remnants of an entire platoon in The Zebra Force, and Pfc. Glenn Kelly in Nashville. With varying degrees of quality and credibility, three of the four films mentioned are variations on a theme: the Vietnam veteran as violently unstable and ready to wage war on the home front. (This theme also appears in later releases, including Paul Schrader's Rolling Thunder and John Frankenheimer's Black Sunday.)

More recently, Vietnam seems to have become a more palatable topic in films -- Coming Home, Go Tell the Spartans, Dog Soldiers, The Boys in Company C, The Deer Hunter, and Francis Coppola's forthcoming Apocalypse Now are examples which come to mind. For a discussion of this trend, see: Richard Turner, "The Worst Years of our Lives," and Richard Corlis, "Guns and Buttered Popcorn," New Times, March 20, 1978. A shorter discussion appears in Newsweek, Feb. 13, 1978, pp. 85-86.

14. These comments appear in: John Russell Taylor, "Tomorrow the World: Some Reflections on the unEnglishness of English Films," Sight and Sound, Vol. 43 (2), pp. 80-83.

15. Among the many interesting aspects of film financing and distribution -- matters which we will not consider in detail here -- is the fact that American films tend to be less dependent on international markets than are British films and films from other countries. Of the American major studios, David Gordon, for example, has written the following: "Since they have the largest domestic market in the world their films are always going to tend to dominate the international screens, as their large production costs can be recouped before they are exported. Their powerful export organizations give the films with international appeal (which do not have to be amorphously international in character) a very strong push." Sight and Sound, Vol. 43 (2), p. 72. It appears, however, that British films must succeed in the international market -- hence the greater importance attached to giving them an "international" look, which presumably means a minimum of "local" polical content. In "The Problem Film in America," MacCann has indicated that even American film executives were reluctant (in 1964) "to film contemporary problems" because of a nervousness about how such films would fare abroad. The article is reprinted in MacCann's anthology, Film and Society (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), pp. 51-59. Interestingly, Baker reports in "Egypt in Shadows" (p.404) that to the extent Egyptian cinema is dependent on other Arab markets, political content is excluded or minimized.

16. Eric Rhode, A History of the Cinema from its Origins to 1970 (London: Allen Lane, 1976), p. 622.

17. Leslie Halliwell, Filmgoer's Companion (6th ed.;

London: Granada Publishing, 1977), pp. 570-571. Halliwell also cites numerous biographies of actual political figures, British and American.

18. MacCann, "The Problem Film in America," p. 57.

19. Joseph Kanon, "The Parallax Candidate," The Atlantic, August, 1974, p. 87.

20. Comments about the twenty most popular films for 1973, 1974, 1975 and 1976 are based on data extrapolated from the chart of "All-Time Film Rental Champs," in Variety, Jan. 4, 1978, pp. 25, 82-90. (The chart is reproduced, with titles listed alphabetically, in Variety, May 17, 1978, pp. 117-137.) The chart includes every film ever released in the U.S.-Canada market if the film earned from that market estimated rentals of $4,000,000 or more. "Rentals" are net returns to distributors, as distinct from gross box office receipts; the latter, of course, would be a much finer though still imperfect indicator of a film's popularity. Naturally, neither rentals nor box office receipts, nor the two together, are a safe indicator of the success of a film as measured by profits. Barry Lyndon, for example, has done reasonably well at the box office, but its returns have been "disappointing" in relation to its enormous production costs.

    Our selection of the twenty most popular films from each calendar year was necessarily arbitrary: beyond twenty, comparisons became unwieldy and we were encountering an increasing number of films that we had not seen.

    It is worth noting, finally, that the "All-Time Rentals" chart includes eleven of the fifteen analytical films in our sample, and only ten of the remaining seventy-five films examined.

21. Andrew Tudor, Image and Influence (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1974), p. 17. Though Tudor seems significantly indebted to V.F. Perkins, he is himself a scholar rather than a critic; and his book, especially the chapters on "Movie Audiences" and "Movie Languages" (pp. 74-134), is easily one of the best and most carefully reasoned overviews of the cinema and society.

22. See, for example: Furhammer and Isaksson, Politics and Film, p. 245.

23. James Paul Gay, "Red Membranes, Red Banners," Sight and Sound, Vol. 41 (2), pp. 94-98.

24. For a view completely contrary to this, see Robert Lane's comments on the "fictional content of the media": "While the problems are largely interpersonal, they inevitably reflect the social circumstances of the actors: poverty and wealth, tension between members of different social classes, expenses of sickness, educational opportunities or lack thereof, and related matters. But the causes of these problems inevitably are treated as personal failure and matters of individual character and strength, or, in a sense, as a destiny which overtakes a citizen without plan or reason. And the solutions to the problems are also personal, not social; and never governmental. Here, on the whole, the media distract attention from politics, obfuscate political relations, and inhibit political participation." From: Political Life (New York: The Free Press, 1959), p. 287.

Lane's comments are undoubtedly valid with respect to some commercial films -- our "sub-culture" movies, for example -- but only up to a point. The problem, as we see later, is his assumption that the audience passively receives film content -- that the audience cannot make its own connections.

25. Differentiating the cognitive, expressive, and normative components of attitude is an honorable tradition in social psychology and political science, though no one pretends that such an inferred disposition is "really" so neatly fragmented. Tudor has cross-classified the inferred attitudinal components with three "channels of meaning" -- as distinct from aspects of meaning -- to arrive at a nine-category typology designed to "direct our attention to the various sources of meaning in a movie." See: Image and Influence, pp. 126-131.

26. Tudor, Image and Influence, p. 211.

27. This definition of "conservative" is from: Maurice Duverger, The Idea of Politics (London: Methuen & Co., 1966), p. 141.

28. Michael Wood, America in the Movies (New York: Delta Books, 1975), p. 17, 130-131.

29. Philip French, Westerns (London: Secker and Warburg, with the British Film Institute, 1973).

30. Will Wright, Sixguns and Society (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), pp. 186-187. Wright's study is one of the most highly regarded examples of "structuralist" film criticism, a movement that seems to rival, if not surpass, the popularity of the once-dominant auteur "theory." Simply stated, his argument is that "the Western is a myth of contemporary American society. As such, it contains a conceptual analysis of society that provides a model of social action." (p.185) A "myth" is defined as "a communication from a society to its members" (p. 16); and a "model of social action" seems to mean an explanation of social action (p. 129). In trying to demonstrate the correlation between the structure of the Western and the structure of American social institutions, Wright relies upon an "independent analysis" of those institutions, gleaned from the work of John Kenneth Galbraith, Jurgen Habermas, and C.B. MacPherson, especially the latter's Political Theory of Possessive Individualism. Wright's analysis appears on pp. 130-137 of his book.

31. Pauline Kael, "The Current Cinema: Notes on Evolving Heroes, Morals, Audiences," The New Yorker, Nov. 8, 1976, p. 139.

32. In the matter of who is and who is not the hero in commercial films, one observer, describing the feature film as "a communicator of socio-political myth," has speculated on which myths have been and which myths might have been developed and transmitted, given the American national experience -- e.g., feature films might have explored America's revolutionary tradition, or the development of the trade union movement, as distinct from the "individualist" myth of crime and Western films. See: Harlan Lewin, "The Feature Film as Data for the Study of Politics," unpublished paper, American Political Science Association annual meeting, Chicago, 1971. Lewin would find little encouragement in the recent "labor" film, F.I.S.T., which has what Penelope Gilliatt correctly identified as a "right wing sweep" (The New Yorker, May 8, 1978).

Elsewhere, others have challenged the very idea of heroes. A recent review of Star Wars by Dan Rubey, for example, condemns that film's "focus on the individual and the recognition of individual merit as a validation of the social system....Because of this focus on individualism, collective action does not serve collective goals, it only advances the fortune and reputation of the hero. The other pilots' deaths simply make us aware of the difficulty of the task and increase the dimension of Luke's victory, giving it the added motivation of revenge for lost comrades." See: "Star Wars -- Not so Far Away," Jump Cut, No. 18, Published Aug. 15, 1978, p. 11. Wood has claimed in America in the Movies (p. 185) that "Hollywood generally has always disliked the idea of the crowd, and even very liberal movies tend to sprout illiberal sentiments when large numbers of people are concerned." (Emphasis added.)

33. The research proposals alluded to are necessarily sketchy, though the possibilities are, of course, limited only by one's imagination. First, we need to understand a lot more about content variations over time. This, it seems to us, is the minimum that must be done before we acquire a real comprehension of the relationship between film content and politics in the larger society. Although longitudinal studies have been done before, they tend to be either completely impressionistic (e.g., White and Averson's The Celluloid Weapon) or genre-based (e.g., Will Wright's Sixguns and Society). It is impossible to do a detailed examination of film content for all films over all time, of course, but other approaches can be taken. One can reasonably (and sensibly) limit one's inquiry to the films of a particular country, and one can use survey sample techniques to limit further the number of films examined. Additional parameters can be set by limiting one's inquiry to, say, the most successful films of each calendar year. Thus, depending on resources available, one might randomly select five of the twenty most popular films for every fifth year from the beginning of sound films. One could also acquire a "sense of the times" by examining newspapers from the period, and, most importantly, by reading reviews and criticisms from the period. Though genre could also be a limiting consideration -- e.g., a sample of all police movies over the years -- a broader approach would be more fruitful, and genre could still be used as a variable in subsequent analysis.

We also need to understand more about the origins of political content in commercial films. Here, of course, data on the backgrounds of film-makers would be useful, and such data are readily available from such sources as the Motion Picture Almanac, as well as interviews, articles, and books pertaining to film artists (and businessmen). One of the assumptions of our research has been that political content in films can be explained in terms of the political interests of the creative originators of content -- directors and screenwriters. This assumption has been reinforced, to some extent, especially with respect to the way some film-makers responded to the Watergate scandals. Nonetheless, this whole question needs to be researched further, not just with respect to creative film-makers, but with regards to the limitations (or opportunities) associated with the production, distribution, and exhibition of commercial films. Producers -- and, increasingly of late, agents -- are the "packagers" of film projects and consequently have a great deal of influence over what films do and do not get made. One wonders, for example, whether there is any relationship between the kinds of films certain producers will "package" -- including, by implication, the political content contained therein -- and socio-political background variables such as social class, religion, education, previous occupation, and so on. Naturally, a central consideration is financial -- if Hearts and Minds made as much money as The Sting, said one producer, "there would be twenty such pictures packaged next year." (Quoted in: Andrew Kopkind, "Hollywood Politics: Hearts, Minds, and Money." Ramparts, Vol. 13 (10), p. 47.) Since the determination of which films will make money is not an exact science, it may well be that the perception of the financial viability of a project is affected by one's own political disposition. The notion of a variable such as religious background having some bearing on film content has been championed by Kael, among others though she is speaking of highly visible directors and producer-directors such as Robert Altman, Martin Scorsese, and Francis Coppola (all Catholics). See: "The Current Cinema," The New Yorker, Nov. 8, pp. 136-145.

Finally, we need to understand more about the way audiences use film content. This, of course, is implicit in our final proposition about the relationship between politics and commercial cinema. In terms of specific research proposals, we would suggest here that it might be fruitful to allow research subjects to report their own feelings and attitudes about particular films, unencumbered by the limitations of close-ended attitude and behavioral measurements. This would not be the easiest data to gather or to analyze, but it might provide important clues as to how audiences interact with films, and might be a significant starting point for more rigorous inquiries later. In terms of existing empirical research, one should consider the possibility that audiences in theatres experience a film under conditions that tend to minimize resistance to attitude change, behavior change, or learning. Selective perception phenomena, for example, may be less effective when conditions of identification are high, or when a film's message is subtle and less likely to engage an audience's "propaganda sophistication." (The latter concept has been invoked to explain the apparent failure of certain message movies, in research reported by Tudor, Images and Influence, p. 98.) Since the cumulative effects of film may be more important than the measurable effects of a particular film, it would also be instructive to learn something about the correlates of long-term cinema exposure -- whether, for example, frequent filmgoers differ from those who attend infrequently, on a standard battery of socio-political variables. The latter proposal, like all those sketched here, could be refined and modified to considerable advantage.

34. Furhammer and Isaksson, Politics and Film, p. 244.

35. Tudor, Image and Influence, p. 99. Tudor's review of the effects literature appears on pp. 92-99. Additional relevant material is presented on pp. 23-39, in his discussion of processes of communication, especially when he contrasts the "asymmetric" communication model -- i.e, the individual is presumed to be an uninvolved receiver -- with a more realistic "interactive" model. The question of attitude and behavior change is discussed in a more general fashion in: Philip Zimbardo and Ebbe B. Ebbesen, Influencing Attitudes and Changing Behavior (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Ltd., 1969).

36. In "Sam Peckinpah: the Survivor and the Individual," -- Sight and Sound, Vol. 42 (2), p. 70 -- Nigel Andrews wrote the following: "Morality, Peckinpah suggests, should not be dependent on tradition, or on legislation, or on political or social ideologies. Once morality is made the province of a collective decision, or of a collective acquiescence in a pre-existing set of beliefs, the way has been opened for the suppression of individual choice."

It is our impression that the whole question of the moral influences of film has not been seriously studied: i.e., it has not been studied by researchers who have no vested interest in proving that movies are somehow corrupting. Yet, as David Denby has pointed out, there is a certain "moral realism" prevailing in contemporary films -- "filmmakers are increasingly able to allow characters their own reality without imposing a moral destiny on them." See: "Mean Streets: the Sweetness of Hell," Sight and Sound, Vol. 43 (1), p. 149. Whatever the effect of this moral realism may be, contemporary films seem far removed from their counterparts in 1954, of which screenwriter Ben Hecht wrote: "They have slapped into the American mind more human misinformation in one evening than the Dark Ages could muster in a decade. One basic plot only has appeared daily in their fifteen thousand theatres -- the triumph of virtue and the overthrow of wickedness. ...Not only was the plot the same, but the characters in it never varied. These characters must always be good or bad (and never human) in order not to confuse the plot of Virtue Triumphing." This is an exerpt from Hecht's autobiography, A Child of the Century, reprinted as "Enter, the Movies," in: Daniel Talbot, ed., Film: An Anthology (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), pp. 257-287.

37. Mario Puzo, "How Crime Keeps America Healthy, Wealthy, Cleaner and More Beautiful," in The Godfather Papers (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Crest, 1972), p. 80. Originally published in 1966, Puzo's article is virtually a functionalist interpretation of crime.

38. Invoking the name of Charles Dickens in a discussion of the cinema is not altogether arbitrary. The great Sergei Eisenstein, for example, saw in Dickens' work a "nearness to the characteristics of cinema in method, style, and especially in viewpoint and exposition..." Speaking of Dickens' novels in relation to his contemproary readers, Eisenstein adds: "they bore the same relation to them that the film bears to the same strata in our time. They compelled the reader to live with the same passions. They appealed to the same good and sentimental elements as does the film (at least on the surface); they alike shudder before vice, they alike mill the extraordinary, the unusual, the fantastic, from boring, prosaic and everyday existence. And they clothe this common and prosaic existence in their special vision." See: Sergei Eisenstein, "Dickens, Griffith, and the Film Today," in John Harington, ed., Film And/As Literature (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1977), pp. 122-136. The material is excerpted from Eisenstein's Film Form.

39. The "passive recipient" notion, as a description of the audience's relation to film content, is also critized in Tudor, Image and Influence, and, at least by implication, V.F. Perkins, Film as Film (Middlesex, U.K.:

Penquin Books, 1972). For some, the audience is regarded as something approximating a perverse participant. Of the many instances of this, none is more aggravating than Gay's "Red Membranes, Red Banners." Consider his comments on The Emigrants, and the characters depicted in it: "Their poverty is not sentimentalized, the corruption of the clergy and the callousness of the propertied classes who ran the government are forcefully documented. Ironically, it is this very accuracy that distances the viewer from the movie. The effect is like listening to an oral rendition of a well known myth. The very willingness of audiences to accept an accurate picture of exploitation and brutality in their own country...is a sign that the representation of reality can become an inoculation against just the consciousness that such a representation was designed to bring out." In other words, the audience is "damned if it does and damned if it does not" accept the work. The fact that the work of director Jan Troell and writer Vilhelm Moberg is so popular "only makes one feel all the more that no audience is seriously prepared to accept information that could constitute any kind of threat to existing exploitative systems, nor tolerate any structural arrangement that has not already been thoroughly explored, pre-digested and defused." (p. 97).

If audiences are not the passive recipients of film content -- or perverse participants -- neither are they autonomous originators of that content. This latter viewpoint, or something approximating it, is implicit in several psychologically-oriented studies of film content, which suggest that the popularity of films somehow necessarily implies the successful reflection of the audience's psychological dispositions (which are sometimes presumed to be shared by film makers). Assumptions such as these are evident in Siegfried Kracauer, From Caligari to Hitler (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947); and Martha Wolfenstein and Nathan Leites, Movies: A Psychological Study (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950). Built into this perspective is the notion that audiences never really get anything new -- they get their own fantasies and day-dreams, selected by them in some imaginary free market of cinema ideas; the audience, in other words, is indulged rather than changed, instructed, motivated, or stimulated.

A more credible assessment of the origin of film content appears in George Huaco's The Sociology of Film Art (New York: Basic Books, 1965) -- a study of three film "waves": German Expressionism, Soviet Expressive Realism, and Italian Neo-Realism. Huaco shows a correlation between the dominant political orientation of directors and "the dominant ideology revealed in the film plots." He concludes, quite sensibly, that film art "bears the mark of the social background of its makers and the limitations and opportunities of its social and historical matrix." Obviously, he does not mean to imply -- nor do we -- that audiences, producers, financiers, and so on, have _no_ bearing on film content.

40. "Participant Observers" is the title of Perkins' "audience" chapter in _Film as Film_ (pp. 134-157). "The real, that is effective, meaning of a film is contained in the total experience which it provides," Perkins argues, and he illustrates his point with a convincing description of how we "participate" in Anthony Mann's Western, _The Far Country_ (with James Stewart). He shows that the film's "main tension is between our identification with the Stewart character and our awareness of his shortcomings" and concludes with the observation that, "_Our involvement_ makes the film an argument about the conflict between independence and gregariousness in human nature, and between freedom and obligation in human society." (Emphasis added.)

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Arnheim, Rudolf. Film as Art. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969.

Baker, Raymond William. "Egypt in Shadows." American Behavioral Scientist, Vol. 17 (3) (Jan.-Feb., 1974), 393 - 423.

Bazin, Andre. What is Cinema? Vols. I and II. Selected and translated by Hugh Gray. Berkely: University of California Press, 1967 and 1971.

Chappetta, Robert. "The Meaning Is Not the Message." Film Quarterly, Vol. 25 (4) (Summer, 1972), 10 -18.

Dale, Edgar. The Content of Motion Pictures. New York: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1970. Originally published, New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935.

Dominick, Joseph R. "Crime and Law Enforcement on Prime-time Television." Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 37 (2) (Summer, 1973), 241 - 250.

Durgnat, Raymond. A Mirror for England. London: Faber and Faber, 1970.

________. Films and Feelings. London: Faber and Faber, 1967.

Eisenstein, Sergei. Film Form and The Film Sense. Edited and translated by Jay Leyda. New York: Meridian Books, Inc., 1957.

Fearing, Franklin. "Influence of the Movies on Attitudes and Behavior." The Motion Picture Industry, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 254 (Nov., 1947), 70 - 79.

Furhammar, Leif, and Isaksson, Folke. Politics and Film. Translated by Kersti French. London: Studio Vista, 1971.

Frank, Robert S. "The 'Grammar of Film' in Television News." Journalism Quarterly (Summer, 1974), 245 - 250.

French, Philip. "Cops." Sight and Sound, Vol. 43 (2) (Spring, 1974), 113 - 115.

________. Westerns. London: Secker and Warburg and The British Film Institute, 1973.

Friar, Ralph E. and Friar, Natasha A. The Only Good Indian ... The Hollywood Gospel. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1972.

Gans, Herbert J. Popular Culture and High Culture. New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974.

Gay, James Paul. "Red Membranes, Red Banners." Sight and Sound, Vol. 41 (2) (Spring, 1972), 94 - 98.

Gillen, John. "Ethos Components in Modern Latin American Culture." American Anthropologist, Vol. 57 (1955), 488 - 500.

Huaco, George A. The Sociology of Film Art. New York: Basic Books, 1965.

Jarvie, I. C. Towards a Sociology of the Cinema. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1970.

Jones, Dorothy B. "Quantitative Analysis of Motion Picture Content." Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 6 (Fall, 1942), 411 - 428.

________. "Quantitative Analysis of Motion Picture Content." Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 14 (Fall, 1950), 554 - 558.

Kael, Pauline; Mankiewicz, Herman J.; and Welles, Orson. The Citizen Kane Book. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1974.

________. Going Steady. Toronto: Little, Brown, & Co. 1968.

________. I Lost It At the Movies. Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1965.

________. Kiss Kiss, Bang Bang. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1968.

Klapper, Joseph T. "Mass Communications Research: An Old Road Resurveyed." Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 27 (Winter, 1963), 515 - 527.

Kopkind, Andrew. "Hollywood Politics: Hearts, Minds and Money." Ramparts, Aug.-Sept., 1975, pp. 45 - 48.

Kracauer, Siegfried. From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947.

Lewin, Harlan. "The Feature Film as Data for the Study of Politics." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, Ill., 1971.

Long, Michele L. and Simon, Rita J. "The Roles and Statuses of Women on Children and Family TV Programs." Journalism Quarterly, (Spring, 1974), 107 - 110.

Ludwig, Jack. "The Port Hope Dilemma: Whether or Not to Cry Shark." The Canadian, March 20, 1976, p. 3.

MacCann, Richard Dyer. Film and Society. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964.

Madsen, Roy Paul. The Impact of Film. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1973.

Manchel, Frank. Film Study: A Resource Guide. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1973.

Mapp, Edward. Blacks in American Films: Today and Yesterday. Metuchen, N. J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1972.

Perkins, V. F. Film as Film -- Understanding and Judging Movies. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1972.

Powdermaker, Hortense. "An Anthropologist Looks at the Movies." The Motion Picture Industry, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 254 (Nov., 1947), 80 - 87.

________. Hollywood, the Dream Factory. Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1951.

Rehrauer, G. Cinema Booklist and Supplements One and Two. Metuchen, N. J.: The Scarecrow Press, 1972, 1974, and 1977.

Rhode, Eric. A History of the Cinema from its Origins to 1970. London: Allen Lane, 1976.

Rosen, Marjorie. Popcorn Venus: Women, Movies & the American Dream. New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1973.

Ross, T. J., ed. Film and the Liberal Arts. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1970.

Sarris, Andrew. Confessions of a Cultist: On the Cinema 1955 - 1969. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1970.

Shaw, Irene S. and Newell, David S. Violence on Television: Programme Content and Viewer Perception. London: British Broadcasting Corp., 1972.

Sitney, P. Adams, ed. Film Culture Reader. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970.

Smith, Julian. "Between Vermont and Violence: Film Portraits of Vietnam Veterans." Film Quarterly, Vol. 26 (4) (Summer, 1973), 10 - 17.

Smythe, Dallas W. "Reality as Presented by Television." Public Opinion Quarterly, Vol. 18 (Summer, 1954), 143 - 156.

Talbot, Daniel, ed. Film: An Anthology. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959.

Tewkesbury, Joan. Nashville. New York: Bantam Books, 1976.

Tudor, Andrew. Image and Influence. London: Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1974.

Watkins, G. S., ed. The Motion Picture Industry, Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 254 (Nov., 1947).

Wertmuller, Lina. Swept Away. The Screenplays of Lina Wertmuller. Translated by Steven Wagner. New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Company, 1977.

White, David Manning, and Averson, Richard. The Celluloid Weapon: Social Comment in the American Film. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968.

_______, eds. Sight, Sound, and Society. Boston: Beason Press, 1968.

Wolfenstein, Martha, and Leites, Nathan. Movies: A Psychological Study. Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1950.

Wollen, Peter. Signs and Meaning in the Cinema. London: Secker & Warburg, 1969.

Wood, Michael. America in the Movies. New York: Delta Books, 1975.

Wright, Will. Sixguns and Society. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975.

Note: reviews and review articles related to the ninety films analyzed are not included in the bibliography. Such material is fully cited, however, in the index to films, Appendix 'A'. Additional relevant material, including reviews of other films, is cited in footnotes.

APPENDIX A

INDEX OF FILMS AND REVIEWS

Several different types of periodicals were monitored during, and subsequent to, the research:

1. Periodicals which routinely review virtually all films released in a particular area. Variety and Boxoffice, for example, are "trade" periodicals primarily geared towards the needs and interests of the film industry itself, especially exhibitors. The Monthly Film Bulletin is a publication of the British Film Institute, and includes plot summaries, reviews, and complete credits of all feature films released in Great Britain. Variety reviews, predictably enough, tend to emphasize a film's box office ("b.o") potential, though artistic considerations are not completely ignored. Boxoffice carries reviews and plot summaries, the former barely tolerable, the latter reasonably reliable. The Monthly Film Bulletin reviews are by serious film critics, and this is easily the most comprehensive, reliable, and serious source of its kind.

2. Film periodicals which are noted for depth of coverage, rather than scope. Sight and Sound, Film Quarterly, and and Film Comment, for example, will characteristically, and justifiably, ignore the vast majority of films released during the course of a year, while devoting half an issue to an interview with Hitchcock, and the other half to an article on Losey, two conflicting reviews of Scorsese's latest film, an item about the Venice Film Festival, and so on. Films and Filming is a lesser cousin of these three, but seems to cover a wider range of films. Take One is a lot more off-beat than the others, and frequently includes serious appreciations of films ignored or treated contemptuously by more "highbrow" reviewers.

3. Popular magazines which regularly feature film reviews. Time, Newsweek, and The New Yorker, are well known. New Times is published every two weeks and includes reviews by Richard Corliss and occasional articles about personalities such as Lina Wertmuller.

4. Canadian sources, such as Saturday Night, MacLean's, and Cinema Canada, which sometimes carry articles on films which are not released or reviewed outside Canada.

None of the films sampled were reviewed in all the periodicals listed. But virtually all the films were reviewed in at least *one* of the periodicals listed. Typically, two or more reviews are listed, and, in the case of more "important" films, six or more reviews and articles have been cited.

Abbreviations used:

d: director
S&S: *Sight and Sound*
FQ: *Film Quarterly*
FC: *Film Comment*
F&F: *Films and Filming*
TO: *Take One*
V: *Variety*
BO: *Boxoffice*
MFB: *Monthly Film Bulletin*

w: screenwriter
NY: *The New Yorker*
TM: *Time*
NWK: *Newsweek*
NT: *New Times*
SN: *Saturday Night*
MCL: *MacLean's*
CC: *Cinema Canada*

Two entries after the name of a periodical indicate the film was reviewed, or relevant material was presented, in two separate issues of that periodical.

AARON LOVES ANGELA (U.S., 1975)

d: Gordon Parks Jr. w: Gerald Sanford

S & S: ____ V: 12/24/75 NY: ____ SN: ____

FQ: ____ BO: 1/12/76 TM: ____ MCL: ____

FC: ____ MFB: ____ NWK: ____ CC: ____

F & F: ____ NT: ____

TO: ____ Others: ____

ABDUCTION (U.S., 1975)

d: Joseph Zito w: Kent E. Carroll (from the novel Black Abductor by Harrison James)

S & S: ____ V: 10/15/75 NY: ____ SN: ____

FQ: ____ BO: 10/27/75 TM: ____ MCL: ____

FC: ____ MFB: July/76 NWK: ____ CC: ____

F & F: ____ NT: ____

TO: ____ Others: ____

ADVENTURE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES' SMARTER BROTHER, THE (U.S. 1975)

d: Gene Wilder w: Gene Wilder

S & S: ____ V: 12/3/75 NY: ____ SN: ____

FQ: ____ BO: 12/22/75 TM: 12/22/75 MCL: ____

FC: ____ MFB: Feb/76 NWK: ____ CC: ____

F & F: ____ NT: ____

TO: ____ Others: ____

AGAINST A CROOKED SKY (U.S., 1975)

d: Earl Bellamy   w: Douglas Stewart, Eleanor Lamb

S & S:	V: 12/24/75	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO 2/16/76	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB:	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

ALFIE DARLING (U.K., 1975)

d: Ken Hughes   w: Ken Hughes ("inspired" by Bill Naughton's play *Alfie*)

S & S:	V:	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO:	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB: Mar/75	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

ALL THE PRESIDENT'S MEN (U.S., 1976)

d: Alan J. Pakula w: William Goldman (from the book by Carl Bernstein and Bob Woodward)

S & S: 45(3)/76	V: 3/31/76	NY: 4/12/76	SN: June/76
FQ:	BO: 4/12/76	TM: 3/29/76	MCL:
FC: Sept-Oct/76	MFB: May/76	NWK:	CC:
F & F: June/76		NT:	
TO:	Others: *Rolling Stone* 4/8/76 *Canadian Forum*, June-July/76		

ANTI-CHRIST, THE (Italy, 1974)

d: Alberto De Martino w: Gianfranco Clerici,
Alberto De Martino
Vincenzo Mannino

S & S: ____ V: ____ NY: ____ SN: ____

FQ: ____ BO: ____ TM: ____ MCL: ____

FC: ____ MFB: Apr/76 NWK: ____ CC: ____

F & F: ____ NT: ____

TO: ____ Others: ____

BAD NEWS BEARS, THE (U.S. 1976)

d: Michael Ritchie w: Bill Lancaster

S & S: 44(3)/75 V: 4/7/76 NY: ____ SN: ____

FQ: ____ BO: 4/19/76 TM: ____ MCL: ____

FC: ____ MFB: Nov/76 NWK: 2/9/76 CC: ____

F & F: Dec/76 NT: 5/28/76

TO: ____ Others: ____

BARRY LYNDON (U.K. 1975)

d: Stanley Kubrick w: Stanley Kubrick (from the novel
by William Makepeace Thackeray)

S & S: 45(2)/76 V: 12/17/75 NY: 12/29/75 SN: ____

FQ: 30(1)/76 BO: 12/22/75 TM: 12/15/75 MCL: ____

FC: Mar-Apr/76 MFB: Jan/76 NWK: ____ CC: ____

F & F: ____ NT: ____

TO: ____ Others: ____

BEYOND THE DOOR (Italy, 1974) (U.K. title: The Devil Within Her)

d: Oliver Hellman w: Sonia Molteni, Antonio Troisio, Giorgio Marini, Aldo Crudo, Robert D'Ettorre (English version, Richard Barrett)

S & S: ____ V: 8/6/75 NY: ____ SN: ____

FQ: ____ BO: 6/30/75 TM: ____ MCL: ____

FC: ____ MFB: Jul/75 NWK: ____ CC: ____

F & F: ____ NT: ____

TO: ____ Others: ____

BLACKBIRD, THE (U.S., 1975)

d: David Giler w: David Giler (from a story by Don M. Mankiewicz and Gordon Cotler, based on character created by Dashiell Hammet)

S & S: ____ V: 12/24/75 NY: 1/19/76 SN: ____

FQ: ____ BO: 1/5/76 TM: ____ MCL: ____

FC: ____ MFB. Apr/76 NWK: ____ CC: ____

F & F: ____ NT: ____

TO: ____ Others: ____

BOY AND HIS DOG, A (U.S., 1975)

d: L.Q. Jones w: L.Q. Jones (from Harlan Ellison Story)

S & S: ____ V: ____ NY: ____ SN: ____

FQ: ____ BO: 7/14/75 TM: ____ MCL: ____

FC: ____ MFB: ____ NWK: ____ CC: ____

F & F: ____ NT: ____

TO: 4(12)/75 and 5(4)/76 Others: ____

BREAKHEART PASS (U.S., 1976)

d: Tom Gries w: Alistair MacLean

S & S:	V: 2/4/76	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO: 2/23/76	TM: 4/19/76	MCL:
FC:	MFB: Feb/76	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

CALL HIM MR. SHATTER (Hong Kong, 1974)

d: Michael Carreras w. Don Houghton

S & S:	V: 1/14/76	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO:	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB:	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

CARAVAN TO VACCARES (U.K., France, 1974)

d: Geoffrey Reeve w: Paul Wheeler (from Alistair MacLean novel)

S & S:	V: 8/21/74	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO:	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB: Aug/74	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

CARRY ON BEHIND (U.K., 1975)

d: Gerald Thomas w: Dave Freeman

S & S: V: NY: SN:
FQ: BO: TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: Jan/76 NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

CHARLOTTE (France, Italy, Germany, 1974)

d: Roger Vadim w: Roger Vadim

S & S: V: NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 6/30/75 TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: NWK: CC:
F & F: Apr/77 NT:
TO: Others:

CONDUCT UNBECOMING (U.K., 1975)

d: Michael Anderson w: Robert Enders (based on a play by Barry England)

S & S: V: 9/17/75 NY: Nov 3/75 SN:
FQ: BO: 9/29/75 TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: Jan/76 NWK: CC:
F & F: Aug/76 NT:
TO: Others:

CONFESSIONS OF A POP PERFORMER (U.K., 1975)

d: Norman Cohen w: Christopher Wood (based on a book by Timothy Lee)

S & S: V: 1/10/75 NY: SN:

FQ: BO: TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: Sept/75 NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

COOLEY HIGH (U.S., 1975)

d: Michael Schultz w: Eric Monte

S & S: V: 6/25/75 NY: SN:

FQ: BO: 7/7/75 TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

CRIME AND PASSION (U.S., Germany, 1976)

d: Ivan Passer w: Jesse Lasky Jr., Pat Silver (from the novel An Ace Up Your Sleeve by James Hadley Chase)

S & S: V: 2/25/76 NY: SN:

FQ: BO: 3/8/76 TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

DEVIL IS A WOMAN, THE (U.K., 1974) (U.K. title: The Tempter)

d: Damiano Damiani w: Damiano Damiani, Fabrizio Onofre, Edna O'Brien, Audrey Nohra; Damiani story

S & S: ______ V: 2/27/74 NY: ______ SN: ______

FQ: ______ BO: 11/3/75 TM: ______ MCL: ______

FC: ______ MFB: Aug/75 NWK: ______ CC: ______

F & F: ______ NT: ______

TO: ______ Others: ______

DEVIL WITHIN HER, THE (U.K., 1975) (U.K. title: I Don't Want to be Born)

d: Peter Sasdy w: Stanley Price, from a story by Nato De Angeles

S & S: ______ V: ______ NY: ______ SN: ______

FQ: ______ BO: 3/22/76 TM: ______ MCL: ______

FC: ______ MFB: July/75 NWK: ______ CC: ______

F & F: ______ NT: ______

TO: ______ Others: ______

DIAMONDS (U.S., 1975)

d: Menahem Golan w: David Paulsen, Menahem Golan, in collaboration with Ken Globus; from a Golan story

S & S: ______ V: 10/8/75 NY: ______ SN: ______

FQ: ______ BO: 10/27/75 TM: ______ MCL: ______

FC: ______ MFB: Mar/76 NWK: ______ CC: ______

F & F: June/76 NT: ______

TO: ______ Others: ______

DOG DAY AFTERNOON (U.S., 1975)

d: Sidney Lumet w: Frank Pierson (from a magazine article by B.F. Kluge and Thomas Moore)

S & S: 45(1)/76 V: 8/27/75 NY: 9/22/75 SN:

FQ: BO: 9/29/75 TM: MCL:

FC: Nov-Dec/75 MFB: Nov/75 NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others: Playboy, Aug/76

DOLEMITE (U.S., 1975)

d: D'Urville Martin w. Rudy Ray Moore, Jerry Jones

S & S: V: 8/6/75 NY: SN:

FQ: BO: 9/15/75 TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

DOWN THE ANCIENT STAIRS (Italy, France, 1975)

d: Mauro Bolognini w: Raffaele Andreassi, Mario Arosio, Tullio Pinelli, Bernadino Zapponi, Sinko Marie (based on the novel by Mario Tobino)

S & S: V: 8/27/75 NY: SN:

FQ: BO: 11/3/75 TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: Oct/76 NWK: CC:

F & F: Oct/76 NT:

TO: Others:

5

ECHOES OF A SUMMER (U.S., 1976)

d: Don Taylor w: Robert L. Joseph

S & S: V: 2/4/76 NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 5/10/76 TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

FAMILY PLOT (U.S., 1976)

d: Alfred Hitchcock w: Ernest Lehman (based on the novel The Rainbird Pattern by Victor Canning)

S & S: 45(3)/76 V: 3/24/76 NY: 4/19/76 SN:
FQ: BO: 4/5/76 TM: MCL:
FC: May-June/76 MFB: July/76 NWK: CC:
F & F: Aug/76 NT:
TO: 5(2)/76 Others: Village Voice, Apr 23/76

FOUR DEUCES, THE (U.S., 1975)

d: William H. Bushnell

S & S: V: NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 11/3/75 TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

GABEL AND LOMBARD (U.S., 1976)

d: Sidney J. Furie w: Barry Sandler

S & S:	V:	NY: 2/23/76	SN:
FQ:	BO: 2/23/76	TM: 3/1/76	MCL:
FC:	MFB: Nov/76	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

GAMES GUYS PLAY (U.S.)

d: w:

S & S:	V:	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO:	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB:	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

GOODBYE NORMA JEAN (U.S., Australian, 1975)

d: Larry Buchanan w: Lynn Shubert, Larry Buchanan
"inspired" by the life of Marilyn Monroe

S & S:	V: 1/28/76	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO:	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB: Sept/76	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

HAZEL'S PEOPLE (U.S., 1976)

d: Charles Davis   w: Charles Davis (based on a novel *Happy as the Grass was Green* by Merle Good.

S & S: V: NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 4/26/76   TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

HEARTS OF THE WEST (U.S., 1975) (U.K. title: *Holywood Cowboy*)

d: Howard Zieff   w: Rob Thompson

S & S: 45(3)/76   V: 10/1/75   NY: 10/13/75   SN:
FQ: BO: 10/6/75   TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: June/76   NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: 4(12)/75   Others:

HESTER STREET (U.S. 1975)

d: Joan Micklin Silver   w: Joan Micklin Silver (based on the story *Yekl* by Abraham Cahan)

S & S: 45(1)/75   V: 5/14/75   NY: 11/24/75   SN:
FQ: BO: 9/29/75   TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: Dec/75   NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

HINDENBERG, THE (U.S., 1975)

d: Robert Wise w: Nelson Gidding story: Richard Levinson and William Link, from the novel by Michael M. Mooney

S & S: V: 12/24/75 NY: 1/19/76 SN:
FQ: BO: 12/15/75 TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: Apr/76 NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

'HUMAN' FACTOR, THE (U.K., 1975)

d: Edward Dmytryk w: Tom Hunter, Peter Powell

S & S: V: 11/5/75 NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 12/1/75 TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: June/76 NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

HUSTLE (U.S., 1975)

d: Robert Aldrich w: Steven Shagan

S & S: 45(2)/76 V: 12/24/75 NY: 1/26/76 SN:
FQ: BO: 1/12/76 TM: MCL:
FC: Mar-Apr/77 MFB: Mar/76 NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: 4(5)/74 Others:

INSERTS (U.K., 1975)

d: John Byrum w: John Byrum

S & S: V: NY: 3/15/76 SN:

FQ: BO: 2/16/76 TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: Dec/75 NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

I WILL ... I WILL ... FOR NOW (U.S., 1976

d: Norman Panama w: Norman Panama, Albert E. Lewin

S & S: V: 2/11/76 NY: 3/1/76 SN:

FQ: BO: 2/23/76 TM: 3/15/76 MCL:

FC: MFB: Nov/76 NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

JOURNEY INTO FEAR

d: Daniel Mann w:

S & S: V: NY: SN:

FQ: BO: TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

IT SEEMED LIKE A GOOD IDEA AT THE TIME (Canada, 1975)

d: John Trent w: David Main, John Trent (from a story by Claude Harz

S & S:______ V: 5/14/75 NY:______ SN:______

FQ:______ BO:______ TM:______ MCL:______

FC:______ MFB:______ NWK:______ CC:______

F & F:______ NT:______

TO:______ Others:______

KILLER ELITE, THE (U.S., 1975)

d: Sam Peckinpah w: Marc Norman, Sterling Silliphant (based on Robert Rostand's novel Monkey in the Middle)

S & S: 45(2)/76 V: 12/24/75 NY: 1/12/76 SN:______

FQ:______ BO: 1/5/76 TM:______ MCL:______

FC:______ MFB: Mar/76 NWK:______ CC:______

F & F:______ NT:______

TO:______ Others:______

KILLER FORCE (Swiss, 1975) (U.K. title: The Diamond Mercenaries)

d: Val Guest w: Michael Winder, Val Guest, Gerald Sanford

S & S:______ V: 12/24/75 NY:______ SN:______

FQ:______ BO: 1/5/76 TM:______ MCL:______

FC:______ MFB: June/76 NWK:______ CC:______

F & F:______ NT:______

TO:______ Others:______

KITTY CAN'T HELP IT

d: w:

S & S:	V:	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO:	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB:	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

LAS VEGAS LADY (U.S., 1976)

d: Noel Nosseck w: Walter Dallenbach

S & S:	V: 1/28/76	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO: 1/26/76	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB:	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

LEGEND OF EARL DURAND, THE (U.S., 1974)

d: w:

S & S:	V:	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO: 12/9/74	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB:	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

LIES MY FATHER TOLD ME (Canada, 1975)

d: Jan Kadar w: Ted Allan (from his own story)

S & S: V: 9/15/75 NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 10/27/75 TM: 12/1/75 MCL:
FC: MFB: Apr/76 NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

LIPSTICK (U.S., 1976)

d: Lamont Johnson w: David Rayfiel

S & S: V: 4/7/76 NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 4/26/76 TM: 4/19/76 MCL:
FC: MFB: Aug/76 NWK: CC:
F & F: Aug/76 NT: 5/28/76
TO: Others:

LISZTOMANIA (U.K., 1975)

d: Ken Russell w: Ken Russell

S & S: V: 10/15/75 NY: 11/24/75 SN:
FQ: BO: 10/20/75 TM: MCL: 11/17/75
FC: Nov-Dec/75 MFB: Nov/75 NWK: CC:
F & F: Jan/76 NT:
TO: 4(12)/75 Others:

LUCKY LADY (U.S., 1975)

d: Stanley Donen w: Willard Huyck, Gloria Katz

S & S: ____ V: 12/17/75 NY: 12/29/75 SN: ____
FQ: ____ BO: 1/5/76 TM: 12/22/75 MCL: ____
FC: ____ MFB: Feb/76 NWK: ____ CC: ____
F & F: ____ NT: ____
TO: ____ Others: ____

MAGIC FLUTE, THE (Sweden, 1975)

d: Ingmar Bergman w: Ingmar Bergman (from Mozart opera)

S & S: ____ V: ____ NY: 11/17/75 SN: ____
FQ: ____ BO: 11/17/75 TM: ____ MCL: ____
FC: ____ MFB: Feb/76 NWK: ____ CC: ____
F & F: ____ NT: ____
TO: ____ Others: ____

MAHOGANY (U.S., 1975)

d: Berry Gordy w: John Byrum (based on a story by Toni Amber)

S & S: ____ V: 10/8/75 NY: 10/27/75 SN: ____
FQ: ____ BO: 11/3/75 TM: ____ MCL: ____
FC: ____ MFB: Apr/76 NWK: ____ CC: ____
F & F: ____ NT: ____
TO: ____ Others: ____

MAN FRIDAY (U.K., 1975)

d: Jack Gold w: Adrian Mitchell (based on his own play, from the Daniel Defoe Novel)

S & S: 44(3)/75	V: 5/14/75	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO: 11/24/75	TM: 4/5/76	MCL:
FC:	MFB: Jan/76	NWK: 3/22/76	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

MAN WHO WOULD BE KING THE (U.S., 1975)

d: John Houston w: John Huston, Gladys Hill (from Rudyard Kipling story)

S & S: 44(3)/75 & 45(2)/76	V:	NY: 1/5/76	SN:
FQ:	BO: 12/22/75	TM:	MCL:
FC: Jan-Feb/76	MFB: Feb/76	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

MARY, MARY, BLOODY MARY (U.S., Mexico, 1975)

d: Juan Lopez Moctezuma w: Malcolm Marmorstein (from a story by Don Rico and Don Henderson)

S & S:	V: 5/21/75	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO:	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB:	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

MASTER GUNFIGHTER, THE (U.S., 1975)

d: Tom Laughlin

w: Harold Lapland (based on the Japanese film *Goyokin*, written by Kei Tasaka & Hideo Gosha

S & S:		V:	10/1/75	NY:		SN:	
FQ:		BO:	9/29/75	TM:		MCL:	
FC:		MFB:	Mar/76	NWK:		CC:	
F & F:				NT:			
TO:		Others:					

NASHVILLE (U.S., 1975)

d: Robert Altman

w: Joan Tewkesbury

S & S:	44(4)/75	V:	6/11/75	NY:	3/3/75 and 6/16/75	SN:	
FQ:	29(2)/75-76	BO:	6/9/75	TM:		MCL:	
FC:	Sept-Oct/75	MFB:	Oct/75	NWK:		CC:	
F & F:				NT:			
TO:	5(1)/76	Others:					

NEXT STOP, GREENWICH VILLAGE (U.S., 1976)

d: Paul Mazursky

w: Paul Mazursky

S & S:		V:	2/4/76	NY:	2/2/76	SN:	
FQ:		BO:	2/9/76	TM:		MCL:	
FC:		MFB:		NWK:		CC:	
F & F:				NT:	2/20/76		
TO:		Others:					

NIGHT CALLER, THE (France, Italy, 1975)

d: Henri Verneuil w: Henri Verneuil

S & S: V: NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 11/24/75 TM: 12/1/75 MCL:
FC: MFB: Dec/75 NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

92 IN THE SHADE (U.S., 1975)

d: Thomas McGuane w: Thomas McGuane (based on his novel)

S & S: V: 8/27/75 NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 9/8/75 TM: 2/16/76 MCL:
FC: MFB: NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: 4(12)/75 Others:

OLD DRACULA (U.K., 1975)

d: Clive Donner w: Jeremy Lloyd

S & S: V: 11/12/75 NY: 12/1/75 SN:
FQ: BO: 11/3/75 TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST (U.S., 1975)

d: Milos Forman   w: Lawrence Hauben, Bo Goldman
from Ken Kesey's novel

S & S: 45(2)/76   V: 11/19/75   NY: 12/1/75   SN:
FQ: BO: 11/24/75   TM: 12/1/75   MCL:
FC: MFB: Feb/76   NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: 5(3)/76 & 5(1)/76   Others: Rolling Stone, Dec. 4/75

OUT OF SEASON (U.K., 1975)

d: Alan Bridges   w: Eric Bercovici, Reuben Bercovitch

S & S: V: 7/16/75   NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 2/16/76   TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: Aug/75   NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

PEEPER (U.S., 1975)

d: Peter Hyams   w: W.D. Richter (based on Deadfall,
by Keith Laumer)

S & S: V: 10/1/75   NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 11/10/75   TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: May/76   NWK: CC:
F & F: June/76   NT:
TO: Others:

PICK-UP, THE (U.S., 1975)

d: Bernie Hirschenson w: John Winter

S & S:		V:	✓	NY:		SN:	
FQ:		BO:	6/9/75	TM:		MCL:	
FC:		MFB:		NWK:		CC:	
F & F:				NT:			
TO:		Others:					

PURSUIT (U.S., 1975)

d: Thomas Quillen w:

S & S:		V:		NY:		SN:	
FQ:		BO:	9/4/75	TM:		MCL:	
FC:		MFB:		NWK:		CC:	
F & F:				NT:			
TO:		Others:					

RECOMMENDATION FOR MERCY (Canada, 1975)

d: Murray Markowitz w: Murray Markowitz

S & S:		V:		NY:		SN:	
FQ:		BO:	6/28/76	TM:		MCL:	
FC:		MFB:		NWK:		CC:	#23
F & F:				NT:			
TO:		Others:					

ROBIN AND MARIAN (U.S., 1976)

d: Richard Lester w: James Goldman

S & S: V: 3/10/76 NY: 3/22/76 SN:

FQ: BO: 3/22/76 TM: 3/22/76 MCL:

FC: MFB May/76 NWK: 3/22/76 CC:

F & F: June/76 NT:

TO: Others:

ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW, THE (U.K., 1975)

d: Jim Sharman w: Jim Sharman, Richard O'Brien (from O'Brien's stage musical)

S & S: V: 9/24/75 NY: SN:

FQ: BO: TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: Aug/75 NWK: CC:

F & F: Sept/75 NT: 6/11/76

TO: Others:

ROMANTIC ENGLISHWOMAN, THE (U.K., France, 1975)

d: Joseph Losey w: Thomas Wiseman, Tom Stoppard (from Wiseman's novel)

S & S: 44(3)/75 V: NY: 12/8/75 SN:

FQ: BO: 12/15/75 TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: Oct/75 NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

ROYAL FLASH (U.K., 1975)

d: Richard Lester w: George MacDonald Fraser (from his novel)

S & S: V: 10/1/75 NY: 10/13/75 SN:

FQ: A BO: TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: Aug/75 NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

SATAN'S CHILDREN (U.S., 1975)

d: Joe Wiezycki w: Gary Garrett

S & S: V: NY: SN:

FQ: BO: 6/30/75 TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

SECRET, THE (France, Italy, 1974)

d: Robert Enrico w: Pascal Jardin (from the novel *Le compagnon indesirable* by F. Ryck)

S & S: V: 9/11/74 NY: SN:

FQ: BO: TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: Sept/76 NWK: CC:

F & F: Oct/76 NT:

TO: Others:

SHEBA BABY (U.S., 1975)

d: William Girdler w: William Girdler (from story by Girdler and David Sheldon)

S & S: V: 4/23/75 NY: SN:

FQ: BO: 3/31/75 TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: Apr/76 NWK: CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: Others:

SKY RIDERS (U.S., 1976)

d: Douglas Hickox w: Jack DeWitt, Stanley Mann, Garry Michael White (story by Hall T. Sprague & Bill McGaw)

S & S: V: 3/24/76 NY: SN:

FQ: BO: 5/24/76 TM: 5/10/76 MCL:

FC: MFB: May/76 NWK: CC:

F & F: June, 76 NT:

TO: Others:

SPECIAL SECTION (France, 1976)

d: Costa-Gavras w: Jorgen Semprum

S & S: V: NY: 12/15/75 SN:

FQ: BO: 3/29/76 TM: MCL:

FC: MFB: NWK: 12/15/75 CC:

F & F: NT:

TO: 3(12)/73 Others:

STARDUST (U.K., 1974)

d: Michael Apted w: Ray Connolly

S & S:	V: 9/4/74	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO: 2/10/75	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB: Oct/74	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

STORY OF ADELE H., THE (France,1975)

d: Francois Truffaut w: Truffaut, Jean Gruault, Suzanne Schiffman (from a book by F. Guille)

S & S:	V: 9/24/75	NY: 10/27/75	SN:
FQ: 29(3)/76	BO: 1/26/76	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB:	NWK:	CC:
F & F: Apr/77		NT: 2/6/76	
TO: 4(2)/75	Others:		

SUDDEN FURY (Canada, 1975)

d: Brian Damude w: Brian Damude

S & S:	V: 6/4/75	NY:	SN:
FQ:	BO:	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB:	NWK:	CC: #22
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

SUNSHINE BOYS, THE (U.S., 1975)

d: Herbert Ross w: Neil Simon (from his own play)

S & S:	V: 10/29/75	NY: 11/17/75	SN:
FQ:	BO: 11/10/75	TM:	MCL:
FC:	MFB: Feb/76	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT:	
TO:	Others:		

SWEPT AWAY.... (Italy, 1975)

d: Lina Wertmuller w: Lina Wertmuller

S & S:	V: 1/1/75	NY: 9/22/75	SN:
FQ: 29(3)/76	BO: 11/17/75	TM:	MCL:
FC: Mar-Apr/76	MFB:	NWK:	CC:
F & F:		NT: 3/5/76	
TO: 4(12)/75	Others:		

TAXI DRIVER (U.S., 1976)

d: Martin Scorsese w: Paul Schrader

S & S: 45(3)/76	V: 2/4/76	NY: 2/9/76	SN:
FQ: 29(4)/76	BO: 2/23/76	TM: 2/16/76	MCL:
FC: May-Jun/76, Mar-Apr/76	MFB: Sept/76	NWK: 3/1/76	CC:
F & F: Aug/76		NT: 2/20/76	
TO: 5(2)/76	Others:		

THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR (U.S., 1975)

d: Sydney Pollack
w: Lorenzo Semple Jr., David Rayfiel (from James Grady's Novel Six Days of The Condor)

S & S: V: 9/17/75 NY: 10/6/75 SN:
FQ: BO: 10/6/75 TM: MCL:
FC: Sept-Oct/75 MFB: Oct/75 NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: 4(11)/75 Others:

WATCH OUT, WE'RE MAD (Italy, Spain, 1976)

d: Marcello Fondato
w: Fondato and Francesco Scardemaglia

S & S: V: NY: SN:
FQ: BO: TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: June/75 NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

WELCOME TO MY NIGHTMARE (U.K., 1975)

d: David Winters
w: Alice Cooper (?)

S & S: V: 1/21/76 NY: SN:
FQ: BO: TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

WHIFFS (U.S., 1975)

d: Ted Post w: Malcolm Marmorstein

S & S: V: 10/1/75 NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 10/20/75 TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

WHO? (U.S.)

d: Jack Gold w:

S & S: V: NY: SN:
FQ: BO: 8/12/74 TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

ZEBRA FORCE, THE (U.S.,)

d: w:

S & S: V: NY: SN:
FQ: BO: TM: MCL:
FC: MFB: NWK: CC:
F & F: NT:
TO: Others:

APPENDIX B

CHECKLIST OF RELEVANT QUESTIONS

Preliminary data

Name of film.

Production sources (studio, producer, country of origin, year of release).

Exposure estimates (some estimate of how many people viewed the film, when such data are available).

Plot summary (sources, besides myself, would include trade publications such as Variety and Boxoffice, and the British Film Institute's Monthly Film Bulletin).

Description of overall technical and artistic quality of the film, including budget estimate, if possible.

Other background material (generally, any information that may be available concerning why the completed film turned out the way it did: *e.g.*, whether the screenplay was original or an adaptation; whether the film was cut by the studio against the director's wishes; and so on).

Director and screenwriter(s)

Names of director and screenwriter(s).

Filmographies, when available (some indication of previous work).

Known or inferred political and social viewpoints, when available (sources would include biographies, interviews, articles, etc.).

Education/employment background, when known.

Any other background information pertaining to formative influences on the director and screenwriter.

The film in general

Describe fully all verbal and/or visual depictions of, or references to, events, processes, groups, institutions, or individuals which are:
(a) of an explicitly political nature;
(b) in some specified sense, politically relevant.

Is there any issue or problem of explicit or implicit political significance to which the film, or part of the film, is addressed? Describe fully. For example:

How is the issue/problem introduced? Are possible or probable causes and solutions presented? Is the issue or problem a central source of tension, or a peripheral plot detail?

Are alternative sides presented? Fairly? Does the film take sides? What is the outcome and what is implied by it? How credible is the overall portrayal?

Every film is set in a specific socio-political system. Describe this system in as detailed a fashion as possible, given the material presented.

What is the film saying about the society in which it originated, and/or the world in general?

What is the film saying about "human nature" and the causes and consequences of behavior?

Generally, is the film of any political interest whatsoever? How might this material be exploited by political scientists for research and teaching purposes?

Major characters and those in explicitly political roles

Name of character.

Sex, estimated age, occupation, and social class.

Racial or ethnic group, and nationality.

Other demographic data, if given. (e.g., party affiliation, religious preference, union membership, and so on.)

In the case of elected office-holders, note constituency and/or base of support if it is known or if it can be inferred.

In what kind of social network does the character function? Description and evidence. For example:

With what kinds of people does he/she normally associate? To what groups does he/she belong? For what institutions does the character indicate support or contempt?

What kind of behavior does he/she characteristically exhibit towards others, including those in subordinate and superior social positions?

Are social and political differences or similarities in any way salient for the character? Does the character engage in any political or politically relevant behavior?

How does the character usually resolve conflicts in which he/she is involved? Is the character involved in any acts of violence? Against whom? In what circumstances? With what consequences?

What wants and needs appear to motivate the character? Description and evidence. Are they politically consequential? Why?

Can any political and social beliefs, attitudes, or values be inferred from what the character does and says, and how he or she is used throughout the film? Description and evidence.

Generally, is there any indication whatsoever that this character has a "political life"?

APPENDIX C

ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF FILMS WITHIN CATEGORIES

i. Films of minimal political interest

Adventure of Sherlock Holmes' Smarter Brother, The
Against a Crooked Sky
Alfie Darling
Anti-Christ, The
Bad News Bears, The
Beyond the Door
Carry On Behind
Confessions of a Pop Performer
Crime and Passion
Devil Within Her, The
Diamonds
Echoes of a Summer
Gable and Lombard
Games Guys Play
Inserts
Killer Force
Kitty Can't Help It
Magic Flute, The
Mary, Mary, Bloody Mary
Old Dracula
Out of Season
Pursuit
Satan's Children
Stardust
Story of Adèle H., The
Watch Out, We're Mad
Welcome to My Nightmare

ii. Social stratum or sub-culture movies

Aaron Loves Angela
Charlotte
Cooley High
Dolemite
Hazel's People
Hester Street
Lies My Father Told Me
Next Stop, Greenwich Village
92 In the Shade
Romantic Englishwoman, The
Sheba Baby

iii. Melodramas with politically interesting sub-plots or implications

Abduction
Blackbird, The
Breakheart Pass
Call Him Mr. Shatter
Caravan to Vaccares
Family Plot
Four Deuces, The
Goodbye, Norma Jean
Hearts of the West
Hindenberg, The
'Human' Factor, The
It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time
Las Vegas Lady
Legend of Earl Durand, The
Lucky Lady
Mahogany
Night Caller, The
Peeper
Pick-up, The
Royal Flash
Sky Riders
Sudden Fury
Who?
Zebra Force, The

I Will... I Will... For Now
Journey Into Fear

iv. Issue or message movies

Conduct Unbecoming
Down the Ancient Stairs
Lipstick
Lisztomania
Man Friday
Master Gunfighter, The
Recommendation for Mercy
Rocky Horror Picture Show, The
Secret, The
Whiffs

v. Movies which include complex social and political analysis

All the President's Men
Barry Lyndon
Boy and his Dog, A
Devil Is a Woman, The
Dog Day Afternoon
Hustle
Killer Elite, The
Man Who Would Be King, The
Nashville
One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
Robin and Marian
Special Section
Swept Away...
Taxi Driver
Three Days of the Condor

It should be kept in mind that these designations do not necessarily mean that films in categories (iv) and (v) were *invariably* more politically profound than those in categories (i), (ii), and (iii). Some "analytical" films, for example, are considerable less astute than others, but they warrant the "analytical" designation because they raise and *try to come to terms with* politically relevant questions which are more complex than, say, whether or not a hero will be able to survive homocidal attacks by sinister Arabs or comic strip Nazis.

As will be evident in the text and footnotes, some films "fit" these categories better than others, and some are downright problematical with respect to this particular classification system (*The Story of Adele H.*, *Next Stop Greenwich Village*, and *92 in the Shade*).